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Daily Report
Near East & South Asia

FBIS-NES-96-089 *7 May 1996*

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Islamic Affairs

Islamic Affairs: Kahane Hay Threatens Muslims in West

MM0305133796 London AL-QUDS AL-'ARABI in Arabic 3 May 96 p 1

[Unattributed report: "Extremist Jewish Organization Threatens To Assassinate Islamic Leaders in West"]

[FBIS Translated Text] London — A state of concern dominated the Muslim community's leaderships and organizations in Britain yesterday after receiving written statements from an extremist Jewish group threatening to kill their children, blow up their mosques and offices, and eliminate their leaders.

A statement distributed by the extremist Jewish organization "Kahane Hay," of which AL-QUDS AL-'ARABI has obtained a copy, said that "the organization warns all active Islamic leaderships, their families, mosques, bookstores (maktabat), and charity establishments in the West to halt their activities against Israel and the Jews immediately, or they will have to bear the consequences."

The statement said that the Jews are the ones in control of the governments in Britain, the United States, and most Western states, and while Jewish power continues to grow, Muslims are getting weaker by the day.

It added: "We know our enemies and how to deal with them. What happened to the Lebanese will happen to Muslim communities in the West if their preachers do not stop their campaign against Israel and the Jews."

The statement said: "Our arm is long, and if our people are attacked outside Israel, we will retaliate against Muslim communities throughout the world. Our units are ready and trained for such a task. O Muslims, be warned: Your lives are in our hands, just as the lives of sheep are in the hands of the butchers...we will reach your homes, children, mosques, restaurants...and will retaliate."

The organization attached a picture of a Lebanese man carrying his wounded daughter who is covered in blood and said, what happened to this man will happen to other Muslims in the West. More than one Islamic organization in Britain received the statement in question by fax annd through the mail. The statement was also sent to a number of mosques and Islamic bookstores.

Doctor Muhammad Zaki Badawi, dean of Islamic College in London, who received a copy of this statement said that contacts have been made between leaders of the Islmaic Organixzations in Britain to discuss these threats and to what degree they are in earnest, and that the police in Britain have been informed of the content of the statement. It is still unknown whether the statement in question is real or false, as no Jewish quarter has denied it [as published] and it is unprecedented in Briatian in particular.

Islamic Affairs: Article Views Mujahidin From Bosnia to Chechnya

96LH0159A Paris AL-WATAN AL-ARABI in Arabic 8 Mar 96 pp 36-38

["Text" of interview with Colonel Grigory of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service by Pavel Davidov in Moscow; date not given: "The Islamic Mujahidin Have Moved From Bosnia to Chechnya. These Are Their Nationalities, Camps, and Battalions!!—first five paragraphs are AL-WATAN AL-ARABI introduction]

[FBIS Translated Text]

Moscow—Pavel Davidov

Where did the "Afghan Arabs" and the foreign Islamic Mujahidin move after Bosnia?

Ever since the expiration of the time limit set by the Dayton agreement for the departure of the foreign Islamists from Bosnia, the intelligence services of the world have been mobilizing to drive out any traces of these "Mujahidin" and to discover the "Houses of War" and new regions of Jihad they will chose or move to. At a time when several security sources are talking about the return of a large number of "Afghans" to Algeria, Sudan, and Somalia, and the introduction of some of them into other Arab states that have not been known for giving them shelter, the eyes of the concerned services are focused on Tajikstan, Kashmir, and Chechnya where a majority of the Muslim Mujahidin have headed in order to help their brothers fight their wars of independence.

Perhaps the most important and newest factor in the process of "banishing the Afghans" is that the conspicuous way Moscow entered the picture hides the extent of the Kremlin's anxiety about the role the Mujahidin may play in opposing Moscow's policy in Tajikistan and, particularly, in Chechnya. This anxiety is reflected in the return of the "Afghan fear" to the successor of the Red Army.

Information confirms that some time ago the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service started attaching special importance in its activities to these Mujahidin, and prepared a strategy for expelling them and preventing their entry into Chechnya in coordination and cooperation with western and Arab intelligence services concerned with the problem of the "Afghans." They likewise have

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pressured the services of East European states — their former allies — in order to push them to take part in the operation to expel the "Afghans." This was done particularly because some of these states are areas of refuge, and where arms are sold to the extreme fundamentalist networks.

Col. Grigory disclosed all these Russian fears and more. He is a senior official in the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service. AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI met him in Moscow. The Russian colonel was clear when it came to raising the issue of his country's fears about the presence of foreign combatants among the ranks of the Chechen leader, Dzhokhar Dudayev. He also wanted to warn about the possibility of these combatants obtaining nuclear arms. Col. Grigory undoubtedly presented the point of view of his country. However, what he said includes important information about the Islamic networks and their camps, especially because this information was transmitted in all its detail to several western and Arab services. By doing this, the Russians hoped to warn the world about the danger of Chechnya becoming the "new Afghanistan." There is no doubt that Dudayev contributed to these fears when he warned Europe that armed operations could be carried to its soil.

What follows is the text of the interview with Col. Grigory:

[Davidov] Ever since the hostage kidnapping operations undertaken by the Chechen combatants, it has been noted that the Russian security services and media have started circulating information about the presence of foreign combatants, some of whom come from Arab countries, among Dudayev's ranks. Do you have certain information about this, particularly in view of the fact that Russian intelligence has not distinguished itself by its effectiveness in confronting the latest operations?

[Grigory] We, as a Foreign Intelligence Service, are concerned with the events in Chechnya from the standpoint of foreign policy. Accordingly, the Federal Security Service operates inside the country, because what is happening in Chechnya is an internal Russian matter. We learned from the information we collected that there are states that are not only concerned with the developments taking place in this Russian area, but are also inciting popular and even government organizations there, which are striving to influence the situation in Chechnya in a manner detrimental to Russian national interests.

[Davidov] By this do you mean the governments and peoples of several Islamic states that criticize Russian practices in Chechnya because they believe Russia is waging war against the Muslims?

[Grigory] I mean the popular organizations and the government services of foreign countries that are intervening in internal Russian affairs. They offer material support to those who violate the constitution of the Russian Federation and supply them with arms and communications equipment. They make their lands available to combatants of Chechen nationality for training, and send combatants of different nationalities to the Chechen Republic to enter the war that Dudayev has turned into a series of terrorist operations.

The abundant information at the disposal of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service indicates that a substantial number of European states — Christian states which are mostly Protestant or Catholic — do not adhere to the principle of a political solution for conflicts. These states offer support to Dudayev, and pretend not to notice that "popular" organizations are providing military support to the Chechen terrorists, including the dispatch of combatants. If the leaders of the Islamic states help and support Dudayev, we could say that they are extending him a helping hand in his capacity as the leader of a Muslim people. They should have changed their position after the "rebels" loyal to him attacked the peaceful city of Budennovsk. As for the leaders of the European states, they should try explaining to him why he should settle accounts with the "Russian bear" who in the past had inflicted damage on them.

Camps in Turkey and Cyprus

[Davidov] Do you believe that the number of Dudayev's supporters among the foreign combatants will grow after the Budennovsk and Kizlyar incidents?

[Grigory] More foreign mercenaries arrived in the Chechen Republic after the Budennovsk incident. The terrorist operation directed against the maternity home made it more difficult to enlist combatants inside Chechnia, not to mention that it drove many to flee from Dudayev's army. On the other hand, it attracted practicing terrorists from other regions of the world which are the scene of conflict, especially Bosnia, where clashes between the Muslims and Croats on the one hand, and with the Serbs on the other, have started to disappear.

Information reached us confirming that, during the spring and summer of 1995, more than 100 individuals from the Islamic groups "The Black Banner," "The Panthers," "Forces of the Islamic Dawn," who long fought the Serbs in Bosnia have gone to the Chechen Republic. Most of them are men between the ages of 30 and 40 with rich combat experience that began in Afghanistan against the Soviet forces. Most of them — who are snipers and experts in explosives and rapid

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reconnaissance operations — joined the "Veynakh" (the ancient name of the Chechens and the Ingush) and the "Soldiers of Mansur" (Shaykh Mansur who fought the Russians with Turkish support and was taken prisoner in 1791) detachments. Both detachments, together with Dudayev's bodyguards, form the nucleus of his army. Both contain different nationalities, including Afghans, Pushtus, Egyptians, Yemenis, Ingushetis, Chechens, and Turks.

As for the nonpracticing Muslim combatants who are less than thirty years old, most of them left their countries of origin seeking work and a livelihood. They fought the Serbs in Bosnia while serving among the ranks of the "Young Men of Muhammad." While heading from Bosnia to Chechnya, they received additional training in camps located in Turkey. The most prominent camp of the "Sons of Khaybakh" is located in the Chechen village where more than 500 Chechens were killed in clashes with the internal security forces in 1944. This camp is located near Trabzon where a Turkish ship carrying Russian businessmen was hijacked. The Chechens who grew up in Turkey received their initial military in this camp, alongside the untrained citizens of other countries. They spent from two to three months in this training camp. After that, most of them went to the Chechen Republic, while some went to the camp at Diyarbakir for training in fighting the Kurdish rebels or to Girne (formerly Kyrenia) in northern Cyprus for training in intelligence work and espionage, including the recruitment of agents and writing in code. If the trainees agree to work for Turkish intelligence, they join one of the Turkish intelligence services (military or naval intelligence or the national security services) and continue their training either in Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir or Erzurum, until they are sent to foreign countries, generally one of the newly independent states in the Caucasus or the Russian provinces in the northern Caucasus, including those controlled by Dudayev.

This is the aid that "public opinion" and Turkish official circles extends to the terrorists who fall under Dudayev's command, even though representatives of the Turkish authorities try to convince us that this is the work of the "Chechen diaspora in Turkey."

The camps located in Cyprus fall within the jurisdiction of the authorities of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Representatives of the Turkish authorities deny having any part in turning Turkey into a telephone switchboard for Dudayev, and an outlet for him through the Turkish airwaves to the television networks of the world. They explain that this is the work of private companies.

Cooperation With French Intelligence

[Davidov] Some information mentions close cooperation in the field of anti-terrorism between Russian intelligence and a number of the intelligence services of other states. How does this cooperation take place?

[Grigory] Russian intelligence deals with the intelligence services of many states, including members of NATO, in order to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, to combat international terrorism, drug trafficking, and organized crime, and to exchange information concerning regional conflicts.

General Vadim Kirpichenko, adviser to the head of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service, visited Paris in response to an invitation from French colleagues. In Paris he met with the heads of the French foreign and domestic intelligence services. Gen. Kirpichenko — who began working in intelligence over 40 years ago and headed intelligence networks in Cairo, Kabul, Algeria, and Tunisia — naturally raised the subject of terrorism and Islamic extremism during his meetings with French intelligence officials.

Gen. Kirpichenko and the leadership of French intelligence both agreed that Afghanistan was one of the largest sources of terrorism, and no less important than the Middle East conflict. The terror that has grown up on Afghan territory has become a mortal danger threatening stability in Russia, Europe, and North Africa. There is information indicating that 2,000 - 3,000 Algerians received their training in the training camps of extremists in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

From Bosnia to Chechnya

[Davidov] Do they have a connection to Chechnya?

[Grigory] Yes, they have a connection to the Chechens and others. International terrorism — including that which emerged in an Islamic land —moves freely from one country to another. It is possible that the terrorists would use their weapons against anyone, even someone who supported them in the past, as is the case of the Afghans.

A group of Algerians who belonged to the "Forces of Abd al-Qadir" detachment (Amir 'Abd-al-Qadir who called upon the Algerians to wage holy war [Jihad] against the French during the nineteenth century) left Bosnia last summer for Chechnya in order to join the "rebels" led by Basayev and Raduyev. At least seven of them took part in the aggression against Kizlyar. The "Forces of Abd al-Qadir" detachment includes members of Syrian origin who belong to the "Islamic Liberation Movement" and members of Saudi origin who belong to "The Organization of Islamic Revolution in the Arabian

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Peninsula." The intelligence services of NATO believe that their members took part in the terrorist operation directed against the headquarters of the U.S. mission in Riyad.

In November 1995 the Syrians, Saudis, Yemenis, and Egyptians in Bosnia formed a detachment called "Soldiers of the Orthodox Caliphs", which a number of Algerians joined. The members of this detachment left Bosnia and went to the Chechen Republic.

In view of this reality, the following question comes to mind: "Where will the Mujahidin of different nationalities go, in view of the fact that the Dayton agreement specifies the departure of all Islamists from Bosnia?" Dudayev will not be able to receive them all. This means that they will go to other Islamic countries looking for work in the "specialty" they studied.

We have received abundant information indicating that the new state of Bosnia is becoming a cover for terrorists and other criminal elements. Many of the terrorists are arriving in the EU countries carrying Bosnian passports, whose bearers enjoy privileges when entering these states. The Bosnian passport is now considered a cover that facilitates the activities of the "pimps" who travel to the countries of the Gulf and North Africa. There is information indicating that today there is a large number of people who hold Bosnian passports and are living outside Bosnia. It appears that 55 percent of the inhabitants of this country are continuously living abroad.

Christians Among Dudayev's Ranks

[Grigory] Abundant information has reached Russian intelligence confirming that the mercenaries reaching the Chechen Republic from the former Soviet' Baltic states and Ukraine are using Bosnian passports. The Bosnian passport belonging to the female Estonian sniper-who was killed during the operation to liberate the hostages held by the terrorists in the village of Pervomayskaya — was confiscated. They also discovered an [identity] card indicating that its bearer worked for the Estonian security service.

Dudayev is hiring Russian-speaking citizens of the Baltic states and Ukraine to conduct espionage and sabotage operations in the northern Caucasus, the Krasnodar region, and the Rostov province.

He supplies them with the Soviet identity cards that Russia still uses. Dudayev's intelligence service purchased a quantity of blank Soviet identity cards in one of the former Soviet republics in Central Asia. Agents working for Dudayev's intelligence service go to the regions adjacent to Chechnya posing as if they were refugees from Central Asia. They rent houses that are used as hideouts for the terrorists who plan terrorist operations like those witnessed in the city of Budenovsk or Kizlyar, or who plant mines along overland routes and railways, or who kill Russian officers or members of the internal security forces. These houses are used to store arms, ammunition, and explosives.

It has become clear to us that citizens of the Baltic states and Ukraine serving in Croatian military units were trained in assassination [a'mal al-qatl], sabotage, and terrorism. They then went to the Chechen Republic bearing Bosnian passports.

[Davidov] You did not explain why Christian citizens of the Baltic states or Ukraine would give their lives in order to achieve Muslims aims in the land of the Chechens.

[Grigory] Dudayev did not enter the war with Muslim interests in mind. He is fighting Russia. This was confirmed, for example, by the leader of the extreme Ukrainian nationalist organization named "Ukrainian People's Self-Defense." While addressing members of his organization — who are being trained in Zagreb among the ranks of the Croatian armed forces — he said, "Moscow must die."

The leader of the Ukrainian nationalists praised members of the organization under his command who went to the Chechen Republic for defending their homeland in Chechnya.

Several pillars of the regime in Ukraine agree with the leader of the extreme nationalists, because they opened the doors of several health resorts belonging to the Ministry of Defense in the Crimea to individual members of the forces loyal to Dudayev.

What confirms that the war that broke out in the Chechen Republic has nothing to do with Islam is that, in my opinion, it is difficult to see Dudayev as a leader of Muslims and defender of Muslim rights. The reason for this is that Gen. Dudayev fought against Muslims in Afghanistan and ordered the execution of Chechen Muslims who refused to follow his path. In a public decree he appointed one of his loyalists to the post of Leader of the Muslims!

The Extremists and Nuclear Weapons

[Davidov] Nevertheless some experts talk about the possibility of building bridges between Afghanistan, Central Asia, the Caucasus, Chechnya and Bosnia.

[Grigory] Yes, it is possible that this will happen, particularly because the unsettled conditions in Afghanistan still provide fertile ground for the growth of international terrorism. The wave of terror rising in Afghanistan threatens Tajikistan.

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We believe that the Chechen Republic has become a center for international terrorism comparable to Afghanistan in its importance, because practicing terrorists of different nationalities are flocking to Chechnya.

We should not forget that weapons of mass destruction are found in the region extending from Afghanistan to the Chechen Republic — a matter that increases the importance of international terrorism and Islamic extremism, of which Afghanistan and Chechnya are two its most important centers. We know that those living off terrorism in this region are preparing themselves to acquire nuclear weapons and technology.

Recently there was an uproar for a second time in Germany because of what is known as the plutonium deal. In August 1994, German intelligence confiscated a quantity of plutonium at the Munich airport. This is fissionable material that can be used for military purposes. They tried to accuse Moscow of selling it illegally to unknown persons. They then admitted that this accusation was fabricated. The investigation we conducted revealed that German intelligence knew that quantities of plutonium had been smuggled from Germany to Pakistan. Aware of the fact that this had to be disclosed however long or short it took, Germany decided to present the facts of the case as if Russia was the front through which this material leaked out. The truth is that the "Taleban" movement in Afghanistan — which is now attacking the government of Afghanistan in Kabul — is the one that stole or illegally purchased in Germany quantities of plutonium and documents relating to nuclear technology in order to turn them over to Pakistan. The movement did this because it had no other way to repay its debts to Islamabad, which granted shelter to individual members of the movement and gave them arms. Islamabad received this as recompense.

I am certain that this is just one aspect of a series of attempts on the part of the terrorists and extremists to obtain nuclear technology or fissionable material that could be used in nuclear weapons. The efforts they are making are a danger threatening the world. The Chechen crisis convulsing Russia — where huge quantities of arms are moved from place to place without proper supervision — falls into the same category.

Political Islam Review: AL-SHA'B 26 Apr

NC0605192596

[FBIS Report] The following is a comprehensive review of all items in the 26 April edition of the Cairo Arabic language newspaper AL-SHA'B that pertain to political Islamic issues.

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11. Writer Notes Israeli-U.S. Aims

PROTESTS, DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST ISRAELI ACTIONS IN LEBANON

A 1,650-word report on pages 1 and 8 by Najwa 'Abd-al-Hamid, Jamal Imbabi, Khalid Yunus, and Dawud Hasan says that "nationalist and popular forces" have escalated their protests against the "brutal Zionist aggression" against the Lebanese people. The report adds that sit-ins, demonstrations, and marches have taken place in all parts of Egypt and that opposition parties and influential political forces coordinated efforts "to respond to the criminal aggression."

The report says a delegation from the opposition parties went to the French and British embassies in Cairo "yesterday" to lodge the Egyptian people's protest against "the brutal massacre of the Lebanese people" as a result of the Israeli shelling. The opposition parties also faxed a statement denouncing the "Zionist massacres" in Lebanon to the embassies of all big powers in Cairo. The opposition parties also "denounced" the Security Council's stand on the "aggression" against Lebanon.

The statement, signed by leaders of the Labor, Nasirite, Wafd, Egypt Arab, and National Progressive Unionist Grouping parties and the Muslim Brothers, calls for halting all forms of normalization with "the Zionist enemy" and supporting the Lebanese and Palestinian people in their armed resistance to occupation "by all legitimate means, including armed struggle."

The report says that security forces prevented a number of journalists, citizens, and party leaders from going to the U.S. Embassy on 24 April to protest the U.S. stand on the "aggression." Journalists and citizens, the report adds, gathered outside the 'Umar Makram Mosque

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chanting slogans against "the Israeli aggression and U.S. collusion" and supporting Hizballah and Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement].

The report says that student demonstrations were held in Bani Suwayf colleges "last Tuesday" [23 April]. Thousands of students demonstrated on the campus against the "Zionist aggression" in Lebanon and "denouncing the Jews' policy and Israel's hideous crimes against the Muslims and Arabs." The report adds that security forces were called in and that clashes occurred and arrests were made.

The report says that the teaching staff club at Cairo University yesterday issued a statement "demanding the freezing of all forms of relations between Egypt and Israel, the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador in Cairo, the recall of the Egyptian ambassador from Tel Aviv, a general mobilization in Egypt due to this war, and the initiation of contributions and volunteers from the Egyptian people to help and defend the Lebanese people."

EFFORTS TO HOLD ARAB SUMMIT ON LEBANON FAIL

A 60-word report on page 1 by Rabi' Shahin says that diplomatic efforts to hold an Arab summit to discuss the "brutal Israeli aggression" against Lebanon have failed. The report adds that several Arab countries, led by Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Libya had held intense contacts on such a summit.

ATTACK ON LEBANON DISCUSSED AT SHARM AL-SHAYKH SUMMIT

A 560-word report by Mahmud Bakri on pages 1 and 8 says "an important diplomatic report asserts that Operation Grapes of Wrath against Lebanon was discussed at the recent Sharm al-Shaykh summit, which was designed to support Israel against the Islamic resistance within and outside occupied Palestine."

The report says U.S. President Clinton briefed Arab and world leaders participating in the summit on the operation, "alleging that its aim was to clip Iran's claws in southern Lebanon by striking at Hizballah." The report reveals that most Arab countries rejected Clinton's reason for a major military operation in southern Lebanon and noted the possibility of solving the "issue" by diplomatic means and through security accords that could be signed after Israel implements Resolution 425. The report adds that Clinton "claimed" that the situation could not wait until Resolution 425 was implemented because waiting would entail the loss of hundreds of Israeli lives as a result of suicide attacks.

The report cites indications that the military aggression against Lebanon is a prelude to other operations to implement what Israel touts as a major plan for Israeli security. The plan aims to attack Hizballah in Lebanon and Hamas in the occupied Arab territories and to cooperate with "various world powers" to direct a preemptive strike against Iran, the report adds.

AUTHORITIES ARREST LABOR PARTY MEMBERS

A 50-word unattributed report on the front page says the State Security detectives in al-Gharbiyah arrested Shaykh 'Abd-al-Mu'ti 'Abd-al-Maqsud, member of the Labor Party commission in al-Gharbiyah Governorate, and 10 other party members on 20 April. The report adds that a Labor Party official contacted Interior Ministry officials and got a promise that these people will be released.

PROFESSOR BANNED FROM SERMONS, MOSQUE UNDER SECURITY CORDON

A 360-word report by 'Abd-al-Hayy Muhammad on pages 1 and 8 says "strict orders" have been issued to Dr. 'Abd-al-Sabur Shahin, a preacher at the 'Amr Bin-al-'As Mosque and professor at Dar al-'Ulum College, not to deliver the Friday sermon "today" and not to lead the 'Id al-Adha prayer on Sunday. The report notes that the state security forces prevented Dr. Shahin from preaching on the "last two Fridays and placed a strict security cordon around the 'Amr Bin-al-'As Mosque. Dr. Shahin had "launched a fierce attack on the Zionist state in his previous sermons and supported Hamas' martyrdom operations," the report adds.

Meanwhile, the report says, the al-Azhar ulema front has begun to file a suit against a decision by the information and preaching committee of the Council of Ministers, which is made up of the ministers of awqaf, information, and interior. A committee ruling stipulates that giving religious sermons and lessons should be limited to those who are appointed by the Awqaf Ministry. It also stipulates that the Awqaf Ministry alone is responsible for building mosques and Islamic compounds in coordination with the Ministry of Local Government.

The front, the report says, has appealed to all religious people and "anyone concerned about Egypt and its security" to do their utmost to rescind that decision.

JOURNALISTS, STUDENTS PROTEST ISRAELI ATTACKS ON LEBANON

A 1,200-word report by Khalid Yunus on pages 1 and 3 and a 950-word report on page 3 by Tariq 'Abd-al-Hamid say journalists and Cairo University students

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have staged protests and demonstrations against Israeli attacks on Lebanon.

The first report says the Arab affairs and freedom committees of the Journalists Association organized a sit-in on 23 April to protest "the Zionist massacres in Lebanon." It adds that the journalists demonstrated outside the association "denouncing the aggression and the U.S. and worldwide conspiracies." The sit-in was followed by a seminar in which the Arab League assistant secretary general and the Lebanese ambassador in Cairo spoke. During the seminar, the report says, journalists chanted support for the Islamic Resistance in Lebanon and Palestine represented by Hizballah and the Hamas Movement. "At about 1815, the journalists burned an Israeli flag while chanting: The people's first demand is the expulsion of Israel's ambassador." The Israeli flag was put on the ground outside the association's door to be trampled by the journalists, the report adds.

The 'Abd-al-Hamid report says "more than 5,000 students of Cairo University organized a massive demonstration on 23 April to protest "the Israeli aggression against the fraternal Lebanese people." The demonstration involved students of various orientations "the "majority of whom were Islamists," the report adds. It also says that the "Islamic Action Students League" issued a statement protesting "the Israeli aggression against Lebanon".

The report says American University students also gathered "to declare their anger at the brutal Israeli-U.S. aggression against Lebanon".

TUNISIAN ENNAHDA MOVEMENT LEADER CRITICIZES TIES WITH ISRAEL

Page 2 of AL-SHA'B features an approximately 1,800-word interview with Rached Ghannouchi, leader of the Tunisian opposition Ennahda Movement. In the interview, Ghannouchi mainly criticizes his country's rapprochement and ties with Israel.

LABOR PARTY OFFICIAL VIEWS ISRAELI ACTS, GOVERNMENT POLICY

As usual, page 5 is entirely devoted to an article, 3,900 words long, by Labor Party Secretary General 'Adil Husayn. In this issue, he criticizes Israeli acts in Lebanon and the Egyptian Government's policy and discusses a recent attack on Greek tourists in Cairo.

He says: "For a long time now, Israel has been insisting on not involving any world power except the United States in its problems with the Arabs and Muslims". The reason, he adds, is because the United States is a superpower and because Israel's influence on U.S. decisionmaking is unparalleled in other countries. He notes that the Israeli attacks further enhanced the Syrian-Lebanese alliance. He adds that the "brutal, bloody massacres in Lebanon" are not an election tactic to ensure success for Peres but "something bigger and more dangerous." What is taking place now, he says, is the implementation of a firm policy based on "an interpretation of the Torah" on which the "Zionist state" was founded. "According to this false religious foundation they are God's chosen people," he notes. The Torah's "justification of killing" is rejected by "most Christians, led by the Egyptian Orthodox Church under his holiness Pope Shanudah," he says.

Discussing the peace process, Husayn doubts that peace has brought any benefits to Egypt. He asks: "How can there be stability and progress when we expect the Zionists to reoccupy Sinai at any time? How can there be stability and progress when they impose policies on us under the threat of attack with their nuclear weapons?

He says: "Since we are now aware of the truth about the enemy, it is our duty to reexamine and analyze anew all our previous policies so that we can start from the beginning on sound bases, relying on God".

He adds that handling the "Islamic awakening" and confronting those who are suppressing this awakening with torture, expulsions, imprisonment, and military tribunals will only lead to an increase in the number of people involved in violence. He calls for "a serious dialogue" between the government and the opposition "without ultimatums or threats." He says there must be a reconciliation with the Islamic trend, starting with the immediate release of Islamic politicians who "have been unjustly imprisoned under military tribunals and the emergency law."

MUSLIM PREACHER PREVENTED FROM TRAVELING ON PILGRIMAGE

A 50-word unattributed report on page 8 says the Interior Ministry has banned Islamic preacher Dr. 'Umar 'Abd-al-Kafi from traveling to Mecca to perform pilgrimage.

AUTHORITIES ARREST ISLAMIC GROUP MEMBERS

A 35-word report on page 8 by Muhammad Bshari says security agencies in Qina have launched an "intense" search in various cities and towns and stormed homes at night. The report adds that the security agencies arrested "all those who had renounced membership in the Islamic Group".

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WRITER NOTES ISRAELI-U.S. AIMS

In a 350-word column on page 12, Mahmud Bakri discusses the Israeli attacks on Lebanon. He says: "Our correct response to Israel's massacres and barbaric aggression against fraternal Lebanon is to get ready to face the dangers besetting us. He who struck Beirut with his aircraft and rockets will not hesitate to strike Cairo tomorrow. He who turned al-Nabatiyah into ruins will not hesitate to ruin Asyut tomorrow."

He adds: "The Zionists and the Americans are linked through their ulterior aims in slaughtering the nation, destroying its religion, and exterminating its people, because their hostile plots will not succeed, except over our dead bodies."

Palestinian Affairs

Palestinian Affairs: 'Arafat To Announce New Cabinet 8 May

JN0605123996 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1100 GMT 6 May 96

[From the "Today's Events" feature]

[FBIS Translated Text] President Yasir 'Arafat's Adviser Nabil Abu-Rudaynah said that the president will present the new cabinet to all the Palestinian forces.

Abu-Rudaynah said President 'Arafat will most probably present the new cabinet to the Legislative Council at its meeting in Gaza on Wednesday. Abu-Rudaynah explained that the new cabinet comprises members from the previous government, PLO members, independents, and Legislative Council members.

Palestinian Affairs: Authority Official on Changes in PLO, Final Status Talks

JN0605133596 Amman AL-MAJD in Arabic 6 May 96 p 1

[FBIS Translated Text] The self-rule authority has embarked on a gradual cancellation of the PLO. The authority declared that the PLO Executive Committee is no longer in charge of the Departments of Popular Organizations, Education, and Culture and Information.

This was announced to AL-MAJD by Muhammad Zuhdi al-Nashashibi, minister of finance in the Palestinian Authority. Al-Nashashibi added that Yasir 'Arafat has decided to retain the PLO Political Department, under Faruq Qaddumi; the Pan-Arab Department, under Mahmud 'Abbas; and the Returnees Department.

Al-Nashashibi maintained that the Palestinian Authority's Council will take over the remaining departments of the PLO Executive Committee.

In a statement to AL-MAJD during a visit to Jordan last weekend, al-Nashashibi asserted that the Palestinian Authority received promises from Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres that he will release all the prisoners held in Israeli jails before the 29 May Knesset elections.

Al-Nashashibi disclosed that the Palestinian Government will be formed within a few days and that it will consist of 18 ministers.

With regard to the final status negotiations, al-Nashashibi said that the Palestinian side will demand the return of the Palestinian part of al-Hammah to Palestinian sovereignty. He indicated that the Palestinian side will not accept piecemeal negotiations on final status issues. He added that the Palestinian negotiators will raise the issues of Jerusalem, refugees, water resources, settlements, borders, and sovereignty.

Al-Nashashibi emphasized that pursuing piecemeal negotiations will only prolong the talks and serve Israeli rather than Palestinian interests.

Al-Nashashibi renewed the Palestinian stand on Jerusalem, saying: Under no circumstances will we accept any other sovereignty over Jerusalem and its holy shrines. Jerusalem is part of the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, and as such, it must return to Palestinian sovereignty and not to Arab or international control.

Palestinian Affairs: AL-QUDS Views Launching of Permanent Solution Talks in Taba

TA0605165596 Jerusalem AL-QUDS in Arabic 6 May 96 p 13

[Editorial: "The Permanent Solution Talks"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Undoubtedly, no one expects the first meeting of the permanent solution talks held yesterday in Taba to produce tangible results other than to confirm the start of the talks, recall that the issues to be raised at the negotiating table are the most fundamental ones in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and that the coming stage is the stage of paying the real dues, which must be based on the resolutions of international legitimacy in order to pave the way for a lasting peace agreement.

Naturally, the launching of these talks — in a symbolic step which the Palestinian side insisted should be taken on the set date — apart from affirming that the Palestinian and Israeli sides are entering the more difficult stage in the peace talks, which will be hard and long, indicates that the negotiating process on the Palestinian track is continuing despite all the Israeli obstacles, impediments, and continuing violations, the latest of which

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was the grave Israeli decision to postpone its withdrawal from Hebron until after the Israeli elections.

Evidently, the opening ceremonies and the symbolic reasons for launching the permanent solution talks are not sufficient by themselves to achieve the required progress, because such progress necessitates a political Israeli decision capable of complying with the commitments of this stage of the peace process. As is common knowledge, however, such a decision is not in the works right now as the Israeli Government's electoral considerations have become the decisive factor in determining its positions, even at the expense of the peace process. This became apparent in the positions on Hebron and the closure imposed on the Palestinian territories.

Hence, it is clear that progress in the permanent solution talks will depend, to a large extent, on the results of the Israeli elections. This is a paradox that entails many perils, especially as the peace process should be governed by the principles and foundations on which this process was based, foremost of all the resolutions of international legitimacy, regardless of the ruling party in Israel.

At a time when it has become clear — from the beginning of the peace process and until now — that Israel has procrastinated and dragged its feet in paying the dues of the interim stage and that what has actually been achieved required extensive Palestinian, Arab, and international pressure, it is natural to expect the permanent solution talks to be long and difficult. At the same time, however, we expect and hope that all peace-loving forces and the international community will support the Palestinian people's just and legitimate demands. We also expect and hope that the co- sponsors of the talks will adhere to their commitments and responsibilities toward a just and comprehensive peace in this region. Only in this way can these talks have real content and the desired results be achieved.

Palestinian Affairs: Paper Sees 'Hopeful Signs' in Peace Process

TA0605132396 Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM TIMES in English 3 May 96 p 4

[Editorial: "Hopeful Signs"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Two events that have taken place over the past week make it again possible to speak of hopeful signs on the horizon. The one was a cease-fire accord reached in Lebanon; the other, that the Israeli Labor Party took the step to cancel the clause in its constitution that refuses to envisage the prospect of a Palestinian state.

Coming almost immediately in the wake of the changes in the National Covenant voted for by a majority of PNC [Palestine National Council] members, the move by the Israeli Labor Party, signals not only that the peace process is about to take off again, but, even more decisively that a new chapter between the Palestinians and the Israelis is feasible. The decision to amend the National Covenant is a major turning-point for all Palestinians. It officially marks the end of the phase of armed struggle, and the crystallization of a new phase which began with the interim agreements set in Oslo. The Israeli government, however, will still have to match this historic decision. Although the Labor Party is led by the Israeli Prime Minister, Shim'on Peres, no Palestinian can be quite satisfied until the move becomes the official policy of the Israeli government, regardless of whether Labor or the Likud are in power. Then will the opportunity exist to establish two neighboring states linked by peaceful ties.

But such an event will still have to come about. For the moment, we cling to hopeful signs, which, however cheering can hardly take the place of solid facts. Israel needs to take steps that will prove to the Palestinians it is serious about peacemaking. Indeed, many Palestinians reacted with trepidation to the news of the amendment not because they wished to see the National Covenant remain unaltered, but because they fear that Israel will not live up to its commitments no matter what the Palestinians do.

The release of the political prisoners, a clause that Israel signed but has not honored yet, would provide an excellent beginning. So would another hopeful sign that should not be overlooked — redeployment in Hebron.

The evacuation of Hebron appears to be seriously back on the agenda of Palestinian and Israeli officials. Skeptics should be reassured by the sight of the vanguard of the Norwegians which arrived in Hebron a week ago to pave the way for the take over. The sooner this happens, the greater the prospects for peace. In the present circumstances, the withdrawal from Hebron provides the test case for the renewed dynamic of peacemaking.

Palestinian Affairs: Israeli-U.S. Pact Seen Harming U.S. Role in Peace Process

TA0605153596 Jerusalem AL-QUDS in Arabic 3 May 96 p 13

[Editorial: "Premature Agreements"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Despite the fact that some observers consider the visit by Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres to Washington and his talks with U.S. President Bill Clinton as a propaganda trip designed

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for the election campaign that will take place later this month in Israel, this statement is not accurate if the visit and the talks are assessed on the Arab and Palestinian levels. This is because what will be agreed upon will be reflected financially and morally on the ground in the form of unlimited U.S. military and political support for Israel and its positions, especially regarding the peace process.

Some might comprehend the Israeli and U.S. sides' signing of an agreement to combat so-called terrorism and the fact that the pledge that the U.S. president made during his visit to Israel "to donate $100 million to combat terrorism" would take the form of an official agreement with a limited objective. What no one can comprehend, however — not only among Palestinians, Arabs, and pro-peace forces but also among large sectors of Americans and Israelis themselves — is the fact that the two sides have taken large strides, as was reported, toward the signing of a defense pact between the United States and Israel, especially at a time when the peace process has not been completed yet and Israel still occupies vast tracts of Arab land in Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon.

Perhaps the signing of a defense pact between the two sides might not be a fundamental development if we take into consideration the fact that this pact in fact exists in the practical sense and that an official document will not lead to further military cooperation, which actually has reached the highest degree. The announcement of such a pact, however, at a time when the United States has installed itself as a partner in the peace process and as its major sponsor will deprive it of its remaining credibility to play the role of an honest partner and just sponsor — at least from the formal and theoretical viewpoint.

Partisan and electoral considerations should not induce a country, with the stature of the greatest power in the world, to embark on steps that are inconsistent with the expectations of the international community. Instead of striving for a defense pact with Israel at this delicate time in the peace process, one should push for the completion of this process, the realization of its goals, and the restoration of Palestinian and Arab rights. It is certain that if matters move in this right direction, there will be no dangers or threats for Israel or for other states in the region justifying the signing of military and defense agreements and pacts either with the United States or with any other country.

Palestinian Affairs: 'Arafat Receives Letter From French President Chirac

JN0605184796 Gaza Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation Television Network in Arabic 1800 GMT 6 May 96

[Announcer-read report over video]

[FBIS Translated Text] President Yasir 'Arafat received a letter from French President Jacques Chirac in which Chirac stresses his country's support for the Palestinian people and their just cause. French Consul (Stanislaus de la Bolle) conveyed the message in a meeting with President 'Arafat today. During the meeting, the two men reviewed latest developments in the peace process.

Palestinian Affairs: Algeria To Recognize Palestinian Passport 1 Jun

JN0605200896 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1800 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Algerian Government has agreed to recognize the Palestinian passport. This recognition came in a memorandum sent by the Algerian Foreign Ministry to the Palestinian Embassy in Algiers. The memorandum states that this recognition will be effective as of 1 June, provided that passport carriers obtain a visa to enter Algeria.

Arab-Israeli Talks

Arab-Israeli Talks: Joint Statement Issued After Conclusion of Taba Talks

JN0605142696 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1300 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] An expanded session of the Palestinian-Israeli final status negotiations concluded in Taba this afternoon. A joint statement issued at the end of meeting stresses that the objective of the negotiations is to implement UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and to solve the refugees issue based on the international legitimacy resolutions.

At a news conference after the session, it was announced that the two sides agreed to form a joint Palestinian-Israeli steering committee to follow up the final status issues.

The Palestinian side to the negotiations is led by Mahmud 'Abbas, also known as Abu-Mazin, who is a member of the PLO Executive Committee. The Israeli side is led by Uri Savir, director general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry.

The statement issued by the two sides after today's negotiations stresses their commitment to continue working toward a just, durable, and comprehensive peace

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and to open the road for a Palestinian-Israeli future that is free of extremism. The joint statement notes that the committee will be in charge of following up the negotiations; reaching an understanding on the final status agreement; defining a framework and arrangements for the negotiations; and forming the necessary working committees. The statement says that the committee will meet periodically within formal and informal sessions at a venue and time that will be set later.

Arab-Israeli Talks: 'Joint Communique' Issued on Final Status Talks in Taba

TA0605142296 (Internet) Israel Information Service in English 6 May 96

["Israel-PLO Permanent Status Negotiations: First Session - Taba, May 5-6, 1996: Joint Communique"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Delegations of Israel and the PLO met in Taba, Egypt on May 5-6, 1996 for the first session of the permanent status negotiations.

The two sides conveyed their gratitude to President Mubarak and the Egyptian Government for their hospitality in hosting the first session of the permanent status negotiations.

The two sides reaffirmed their determination to put an end to decades of confrontation and to live in peaceful coexistence, mutual dignity and security, and their desire to achieve a just, durable and comprehensive peace settlement and historic reconciliation through the agreed political process.

The two sides reiterated their recognition of their mutual legitimate and political rights, and their adherence to the mutual recognition and commitments in the letters exchanged between the PLO and the Government of Israel on September 9th and 10th 1993.

The two sides agreed that their negotiations on permanent status would be based on the Declaration of Principles of 1993 and the Interim Agreement of 1995.

The two sides reconfirmed their understanding that the negotiations on the permanent status will lead to the implementation of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 in accordance with the Declaration of Principles.

The two sides reiterated their commitment to pursue their aim of achieving a permanent, just, comprehensive peace settlement and to continue to combat terror in order to pave the way for a Palestinian-Israeli future devoid of terror and violence, a future of peace, security and stability.

The two sides further agreed to form a steering negotiation group comprised of 4-5 persons from each side that would develop the concept of the permanent status agreement, define the framework and modalities of the negotiations, and then establish working groups as required.

The steering negotiation group will meet periodically, both formally and informally, at such times and places as agreed by the two sides with the aim of advancing the negotiations in the most effective manner.

Israel and the PLO agreed that the negotiations on permanent status between them will be conducted on the basis of Article V of the Declaration of Principles, which reads as follows:

Article V TRANSITIONAL PERIOD AND PERMANENT STATUS NEGOTIATIONS

1. The five-year transitional period will begin upon the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and Jericho area.

2. Permanent status negotiations will commence as soon as possible, but not later than the beginning of the third year of the interim period, between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian people representatives.

3. It is understood that these negotiations shall cover remaining issues, including: Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security arrangements, borders, relations and cooperation with other neighbors, and other issues of common interest.

4. The two parties agree that the outcome of the permanent status negotiations should not be prejudiced or preempted by agreements reached for the interim period.

Both sides agreed to expedite their common work in the People to People program, as initiated by the Government of Norway.

Both sides decided to expedite the work of their various committees in order to ensure in coordination the full implementation of the Interim Agreement.

Arab-Israeli Talks: Joint Steering Committee Formed To Follow Up on Issues

JN0605124296 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1100 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] An expanded session of the Palestinian-Israeli final-status negotiations was concluded in Taba a short while ago. The second session was held after a closed meeting between Mahmud 'Abbas, head of the Palestinian side to the talks, and Uri Savir, head of the Israeli side to the talks.

At a news conference held at the conclusion of the session, it was announced that the two sides agreed to

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form a joint steering committee to follow up on final-status issues.

The negotiations will be resumed after the Israeli elections.

Arab-Israeli Talks: 'Urayqat—Taba Talks 'Real Negotiations' With Israel

NC0705084996 Cairo MENA in Arabic 0605 GMT 7 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 7 May (MENA)—Sa'ib 'Urayqat, a member of the Palestinian delegation in the final-status negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority [PA], has described the negotiations as the beginning of a new stage in the peace process. He added: You could say the real negotiations between the two sides have actually started.

'Urayqat said in an interview with the Voice of the Arabs broadcast today that holding the negotiations in Taba, Egypt, confirms that Egypt constitutes a major force in strengthening the peace process and that no Palestinian-Israeli agreement since the peace process began has lacked the imprint of Egyptian diplomacy.

On the possibility of the Likud Bloc coming to power in Israel and its effects on the peace process, 'Urayqat said the Palestinians are trying to make peace with Israel as a whole, not with a particular party in Israel. He clarified that the Palestinian side sees the Israeli elections as an internal affair.

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Algeria

Algeria: Armed Group Holds Hostages in Suburban Flat

LD0605153296 Paris Radio France International in French 1230 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] In Algeria, an Islamic commando group has been entrenched inside a flat in the Said Hamdine housing estate, overlooking Algiers. They are holding several hostages. Since yesterday morning special forces' marksmen have been trying to force them out. Amar Ben Salem [as heard] reports from Algiers.

[Begin Ben Salem recording] According to the latest reports, the group, armed with Kalashnikovs, are holding a dentist and twins hostage.

The group, made up of approximately ten men, are entrenched in a flat in the Said Hamdine housing estate, a suburb of Algiers, close to the motorway East. The district has been sealed off by the security forces who are trying to obtain the hostages' release.

According to the daily newspaper LA TRIBUNE, the armed group yesterday freed three children and two women. There was a sustained exchange of gunfire yesterday at the beginning of the hostage-taking incident, killing five people. No more details are known about the circumstances of this tragic development.

LA TRIBUNE suspects that Djamel Zitouni, presumed leader of the Armed Islamic Group [GIA], may be part of the group. This report has yet to be confirmed.

During the morning, sporadic shots have been heard. The security forces are still laying siege to the flat, and the district has been completely cordoned off. [end recording]

Algeria: Security Forces Free Hostages

LD0705101396 Paris France-Info Radio in French 0900 GMT 7 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The hostage crisis in Algiers has ended. After a seige that lasted more than 24 hours, the security forces launched an assault and freed the families being held by an armed commando. We do not have any further details at present.

Algeria: 5 Reported Killed in Security Force Attack on Islamists

LD0605224896 Paris Radio France International in French 2130 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] In Algeria, five people, including one police officer, were reportedly killed 5 May during an attempted attack by security forces on a building in the residential district of Hydra in Algiers. A commando of some 10 Islamists is holding civilians hostage, and the building has been besieged by the security forces for more than 24 hours now. [passage omitted]

Algeria: Draft Agreement on Relations With Libya Signed

LD0605161196 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1200 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] A draft agreement on the consolidation of Algerian-Libyan relations, particularly on border security and the development of border areas and trade exchanges, was signed at El Mithak Residence today. The agreement was signed by Mr. Mustapha Benmansour, the Algerian minister of interior, local authorities, and environment, and Mr. Muhammad Mahmud al-Hijazi, secretary of the Libyan General People's Committe for Justice and Public Security. The signing ceremony was also attended by the members of the committee of experts from both countries.

The agreement aims at implementing the resolutions adopted by the Higher Joint Algerian-Libyan Committee which met in Algiers last July.

On the significance of the agreement, Mr. Muhammad Mahmud al-Hijazi, secretary of the General People's Committee for Justice and Public Security, had this say to our colleague Fatiha Zerrag:

[Begin al-Hijazi recording] Libyan-Algerian relations are strategic relations and, naturally, since these are strategic relations, any action undertaken by any sector or any ministry is an action aimed at strengthening these strategic relations. Our signing of this draft agreement today confirms the continuity of this action and this cooperation with a view to achieving security and stability for our two countries. We are constantly cooperating with our Algerian brethren in the security area since this area concerns both of us. The steps we have taken since the first meeting and since the meeting of the Higher Joint Libyan-Arab Committees are indeed positive and real steps in stabilizing security and achieving tranquillity for our two peoples. [end recording]

[Announcer] For his part, Mr. Mustapha Benmansour, minister of interior, local authorities, and environment, said:

[Begin Benmansour recording] Algeria is convinced that there can be no prosperity or development for the peoples without guaranteeing security in the widest possible sense. Therefore, for the past year my colleague Mahmud, the [Libyan] secretary, and myself have been working in our two sectors and at the level of the

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committees which have been set up. There are three committees in charge of three files and their task is to examine and tackle the various aspects of security in the two countries and across the long stretch of the border between us. [end recording]

Algeria: North Korean Foreign Minister Arrives for 3-Day Visit

LD0605164596 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1200 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Mr. Kim Yong-nam, vice premier and foreign minister in Democratic Korea, and the delegation accompanying him, arrived in Algiers this morning on a three-day official visit.

The Korean minister was greeted at Houari Boumediene International Airport by Mr. Ahmed Attaf, the foreign minister. Talks between Ahmed Attaf and Kim Yong-nam will start at the Foreign Ministry this afternoon.

During his stay in Algiers, the Korean minister will be received by Prime Minister Mr. Ahmed Ouyahia and Transitional National Council Speaker Mr. Abdelkader Bensalah. Mr. Kim Yong-nam will also be received on Wednesday by the president of the republic, Mr. Liamine Zeroual.

Algeria: Foreign Minister Receives North Korean Counterpart

LD0605210696 Algiers ENTV Television Network in Arabic 1900 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Kim Yong-nam, the vice premier and foreign minister in the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea, who arrived in our country today on a three-day official visit, held a meeting with our Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf. The tete-a-tete talks extended to include members of the two countries' delegations. The talks focused on bilateral relations and ongoing consultations as well as international issues of common interests.

Algeria: Zeroual Answers Questions at News Conference

LD0605152296 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1851 GMT 5 May 96

[Question and answer portion of a news conference by Algerian President Liamine Zeroual with foreign and domestic correspondents in Algiers on 5 May — recorded; italicized passages in French]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [Unidentified correspondent] Mr. President, *before the agenda you talked about* you spoke about the conditions for a return to calm. What are these conditions? Have there been new developments regarding the clemency policy? *As far as the participants in the dialogue are concerned, what distinguishes the recent dialogue held with the political parties? What can we expect from the multilateral consultations which will be held before the national conference?*

[Zeroual] God bless you. I will answer the brother reporter's last question. In my preliminary intervention I personally — not commenting on the statements made by the brothers who participated in the consultations after they left the Presidency — consider the preliminary consultations were characterized by a spirit of responsibility by all the parties that I received at the presidency. The consultations were also realistic because what the country is experiencing has made every one of us aware of the dangers of this crisis and of the need to find a final resolution through consulting with all the political class to deliver the country from this crisis. I think this answers your question.

[Correspondent] You spoke about the conditions of a return to calm. Could you tell us whether there will be an initiative with the aim of ensuring better security and an easing of tension? What initiatives may we expect?

[Zeroual] Concerning the conditions for a return to calm on the national scene, you all know, brothers, that since 1994 the state has been taking numerous steps in this direction. You know too that one of these steps was the issuance of the mercy law which is now in force, a law that is yielding results every day. [passage omitted] Regarding future initiatives, we expect the political parties to adopt clear positions on the basic problem besetting the country; that is, the problem of terrorism. Likewise, some political formations are expected to stop the confusion that we regrettably continue to witness, after the Algerian people voiced their verdict to those who are destroying the state institutions and killing innocent people.

The state has taken several constructive measures to ensure a return to calm, and today the time has come for those who still seek to justify the positions of terrorist groups to adopt tangible measures and to clarify such measures to the Algerian people.

[Correspondent] Some political parties have accepted the idea of taking part in a national conference. What prerogatives will be given to such a conference?

[Zeroual] In my opening statement I told you about the proposals I personally made to the political parties, public figures, and national organizations. I said that these proposals will be included in a memo which will be sent to the parties in the next few days. I expect all sides to express their views on all the proposals put forward to them in the memo. At this

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stage of the national dialogue, I cannot start analyzing the positions of the sides that have taken part in the preliminary consultations. The brothers may convey their own proposals to the presidency.

[Television correspondent Ahmed Brahim] Thank you, Mr. President. My first question is as follows: Did you feel that there was collective approval, from all the parties to the dialogue, of all the proposals you put forward during the series of consultations held last month? I refer here to matters concerning amending the Constitution, amending the law on political parties, and the agenda for the completion of the electoral process.

My second question is: Can you tell us the difference between the series of consultations held this month for an exchange of views and those held previously, especially after the recent 16 November elections? Ahmed Brahim, for the television. Thank you.

[Zeroual] On the whole, as regards the proposals I made to national figures, party leaders, and organizations, I felt that all the brothers were very willing and totally prepared to work together in order to achieve effective solutions which will bring our country out of the crisis it has been enduring for several years. As regards the exact views of every side I received on the proposals put to them, I must repeat that these will be disclosed after we have received their written replies so that we can really discover the views of every one of them.

Naturally, it is normal to have disagreements. In a state which is building its democracy, the disagreements in the beginning can be about specific points. However, in my meetings with all the brothers I felt that there was a real will and a real readiness to work together to finally bring the country out of the crisis it is facing. If we are not sufficiently cautious, and if we fail to resolve these matters once and for all, we could overcome the crisis for one, two, or even five years but the crisis will return. If we fail to solve the national crisis at its roots, we could after a while return to another crisis. Therefore, I think that it is high time that the authorities and the political parties abandoned all their narrow calculations; calculations by individuals and by those in power. We should all work together and we can do it. The political class and the civil society in our country have sufficient capabilities and means to contribute effectively to the efforts aimed at bringing the country out of this crisis. [passage omitted]

[Correspondent] Mr. President, could we say that Algeria convinced its foreign partners when it briefed them at the Sharm al-Shaykh summit on the internal situation in the economic and security fields? Thank you.

[Zeroual] God bless you. Before I answer your question, I would like to say that Algeria's participation in the Sharm al-Shaykh summit was based on a sovereign decision. You all know that Algeria has always supported the peace process in the Middle East. We have our own views on the peace process and on how to achieve a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East. We believe that as long as there are Arab lands in the Middle East that are under occupation, and as long as we continue to witness, as we did recently, major attacks being perpetrated against an Arab country without stirring any strong reactions from the international community, we consider that the peace process in the Middle East is still in need of further work and honest intentions from all sides concerned. Therefore, Algeria undertakes its decision on the basis of full sovereignty.

With regard to Algeria's participation at Sharm al-Shaykh, it was in response, as you remember, to the call by Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat to hold the summit. Algeria has always supported and still supports and stands by the Palestinian people until they achieve all their aspirations.

Likewise, we took advantage of this summit to put forward our view, and I will put it forward again and again because, at all international meetings, Algeria always speaks about this terrorism phenomenon. Our view is that this phenomenon does not affect Algeria alone and now, thanks be to God, many if not the majority of states have espoused Algeria's view of terrorism as an international phenomenon. No state in the world, no matter how strong it may be, can say that it is immune to this phenomenon. [passage omitted]

[Correspondent] Mr. President, a short while ago you spoke about setting up new institutions. What are these institutions, and what role will they play in political life? You also spoke about ensuring the safety of national identities: could you further clarify this in light of an amendment to the Constitution?

[Zeroual] Some brothers I received have already mentioned the institutions that I said could figure in an amended Constitution. I say only that such institutions will strengthen and reinforce democracy. For example: our parliament has one chamber, and we could set up a second. The benefits of such a second chamber are well known, and they are in use in the countries that truly practice democracy. [passage omitted]

Regarding your question on national identity, all Algerians now agree that national identity is based on three elements: Islam, Arab identity, and Tamazight [Berber element]. In my introduction I said that these constituents of our national identity must be secure from political

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tricks and games that have led our country into the current situation.

[Correspondent] Mr. President, the clear and deep dispute over the future society we want is one of the causes of the crisis in Algeria. There are two major ideas. I and the public want to know whether, during your consultations with the political parties and public figures, you have sensed any coming together of views or a trend toward a consensus to get out of the crisis? The second question is this: a colleague has spoken about measures taken to calm the situation down. We have seen this and it is good, but acts of sabotage and assassinations continue. Is the state going to take severe measures to save the innocent and protect social and economic institutions from criminal attacks?

[Zeroual] Concerning the future society we want, I have already spoken about this subject as a presidential candidate during and after the presidential elections. I believe that the Algerian people chose during the liberation revolution the type of society they want to live in.

The Algerian people reaffirmed this choice on 16 November last year. Therefore, as far as I am concerned, the issue of the social program is not open for discussion. Naturally, we have political parties and every one of them has the right to propose its own model and its own project for our society. What I can state is that the final say on these subjects does not go to the political parties or anyone else; it is the Algerian people who have the final say. I believe that the Algerian people have already had their say on the matter.

Regarding the second question on the measures of appeasement and the measures which the state could take in order to further reduce these criminal acts which the country is facing, we have all noticed that the security situation is constantly improving, despite the operations carried out by these groups every now and then. The first evidence that the security situation is improving is, in my opinion, the collective denunciation by the Algerian people of these terrorist acts. It is our people who are bearing the brunt of all the difficulties generated by the crisis, whether with regard to the security aspect or with regard to the economic aspect. Despite these difficulties, our people have become aware of the actions of these criminals. As you yourselves can see on the ground, our people are confronting these actions with perseverance and courage.

The other evidence proving that the security situation is constantly improving is provided by the severe blows these criminal groups are being dealt almost daily by the security forces. This is taking place within the law and human rights are being respected. Further evidence is provided by the fact that, since the clemency law was issued, we have noted that over 1,000 young men have given themselves up and surrendered their weapons to the security forces or directly to the judicial authorities. As I said in the beginning, this operation is giving results and is continuing. This is more proof that the security situation is improving in our country.

You know that in the past two years the state and the civil society have made huge efforts toward the states which, as I was telling you, were regarded as rear bases for these terrorist groups. Thanks to these efforts and thanks to the exemplary lesson which the Algerian people gave in the 16 November presidential elections, we all notice today that these states are reassessing their analyses and are reconsidering their views on our country. They now look at Algeria as a partner which has its weight on the regional scene and on the international scene.

In this respect, the Algerian state is continuing its efforts toward our partners abroad to let them know more about the real situation in our country to counter the exaggerations and the preconceived ideas which were unfortunately, and I must say this, being fed by Algerians. They were saying that Algeria was in a state of civil war and that the Algerian people were living under the yoke of a military power, and so on. These wrong concepts were motivated only by the pursuit of power. Even our partners abroad have become aware of the real situation in our country, and they are looking at our country because Algeria has capabilities, Algeria has its place, and it will regain a stronger place once it has overcome the crisis it is facing.

[Correspondent] Mr. President, the 16 November elections gave you full popular legitimacy. All institutions are now strongly and efficiently working for the return of stability in the country. So far the people, who have been patient for a long time, are waiting for a decision to be taken by your excellency, clarifying the situation of the country, particularly regarding the administration and other sections considered to be among the reasons for the situation in the country.

[Zeroual] I think that if you have read the government's 1996 program properly, an important part of this program is devoted to the reform and purge of the administration.

We have already started doing this and we are continuing to do it. When we talk about our administration, we must not exaggerate the facts. Indeed, our administration is still suffering from problems and deficiencies. But, thanks to our administration, the managerial staff of the Algerian state, and the people's steadfastness, Algeria has survived all the violent turbulence since 1988.

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So, have a close look at the government's 1996 program. All energies and capacities have been mobilized to implement it. In addition to the government's 1996 program, the state, for the first time in our country's history since independence, has set up a comprehensive strategy for development in all fields.

There is a document which soon will the subject of a wide debate by all social and economic partners and experts. I personally asked the political parties to take part in setting up a strategy of development of our country for the next five years.

The government's program also gives major importance to the struggle against social diseases. You all know that these diseases do exist in our society. The struggle against theses diseases has become one of the legitimate claims of our people.

In this respect, the Algerian state is assuming its responsibility in order to fight against this phenomenon which has dangerously hit the national economy. We know and we have heard that some say that this a temporary campaign or a campaign of settling old scores.

I take this opportunity to tell you that this campaign will go on and will not be temporary. It is not a campaign aimed at settling old scores, because I personally, and the government, have no old scores to settle with anyone. But whoever harms the national economy or misuses state funds and our people's property will be dealt with according to the full glare of the law.

I, personally, affirm this to the officials concerned, so that all prosecutions of people harming the national economic capacity are carried out within the framework of the law and in full openness.

[Correspondent] It seems that there are still some obstacles in setting up the Maghreb Union. What can you say about this, and what is Algeria doing to reactivate the Maghreb Union?

[Zeroual] Regarding the Arab Maghreb Union [UMA], you know, brothers, that as far Algeria is concerned, this has been and remains a strategic choice and a top national priority. It is a legitimate claim of the Algerian people and of all peoples of the region.

It is true that since the setting up of the UMA, my brother leaders of these states are not satisfied with the speed of the setting up of this institution which is, as I said, one of the claims of all peoples in the region.

Naturally, the setting up of this structure requires time, effort, and a strong political will. I can tell you that this strong political will to build the structure of the UMA does exist in Algeria and among our brother leaders of the Maghreban states.

Sometimes, problems and obstacles appear. But I am convinced that, because the goal of setting up the UMA has matured, these difficulties, which I regard as marginal, will disappear. The reason is that the future of the coming generations in the Maghreban countries depends on the setting up of the UMA.

To face up to the current challenges and those of the next century, and you know that the current world is one of economic and political groupings, it has become a necessity for all peoples and leaders of this region to courageously overcome these marginal divergences appearing from time to time, in order to really achieve a complementary UMA in economic and social fields.

Brothers, you know that the member countries of the UMA have great potential and are capable of becoming a regional power serving the interests of the peoples of the region, Africa, and the Arab world. This is Algeria's view regarding the estabishment of the UMA's structure.

[Correspondent] Mr. President, have you discussed the economic situation with the political partners, and are you assured about the troubles on the social front? Thank you.

[Zeroual] Naturally, we discussed the social and economic issues with the brother leaders of political parties and organizations, these are important issues. Each and every Algerian is experiencing the impact of the economic crisis which the country is suffering from.

On my part, and this is obvious, and every one of us is experiencing it directly or indirectly, the economic crisis that our country is going through is a dangerous and a very big one, but Algeria has the means within this field, particularly if we know how to go back and give work its real value, and if we, the government — this is a government duty, not that of the population — know how to put to good use all the financial resources in our possession, so that we can breathe a new life into all our economic institutions. Also, if we know how to share the sacrifices among ourselves, because they are big sacrifices, and our people are suffering from them on a daily basis, and if we know how to implement national solidarity and social justice, we have all the means for Algeria to emerge victorious, God willing, from the economic crisis. I repeat, brothers, that it is not an easy operation. We know that is a difficult task, which necessitates sacrifices, efforts, and work from all of us so that we gradually get our country out of the economic crisis.

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Personally, I am reassured that if we knew how to work, first, we must get back to work seriously, this is not only at certain levels but we must value work.

We will really apply the policy of social justice and we will share, not just with words but truly, the burden and the weight of the repercussions of the economic crisis. If we meet these conditions, and we are capable of meeting them, our country will then come out of the crisis.

[Correspondent] *Mr. President: You have talked about identity values, the three aspects, namely Islam, Arabism and the Amazigh [Berber] identity, which will be put above the political game, consequently above any politicking. Does this mean that the problem of political Islam is going to be resolved by a revision of the law on the [political] parties?*

[Zeroual] The consequences of the crisis, brethren, and the source of the crisis which started in our country in 1988, is this confusion between the political practices and the exploitation not just of Islam but of all our values, and the basic elements of our character. These are exploited for political reasons. If we want to bring our country out of this crisis once and for all and really learn from this painful experience which we have all been going through for many years, we must protect the basic elements of the national character from political manipulation, because Islam is the religion of every one of us; it is the religion of all Algerians. Nobody should have a *monopoly over religion, over our sacred religion.*

Regarding Arabism, by virtue of our history we all belong to this great nation, namely the Arab nation, and nobody can say "this is only for me." The same applies to the Amazigh identity. It is a heritage and something which brings together all the Algerians, not just those living in a specific area and not just a specific group of people. This is a gain for all the Algerians. If we know how to preserve these basic elements of our character, we will avoid encountering problems such as those encountered by our country because of the manipulations.

If anyone wants to go into politics, let them present a political program; and also an economic and social program. Let them present it freely to the Algerian people. If they are approved by the Algerian people it is the duty of every one of us to help them implement their program. However, those who say that one of the basic elements of the national character can be used for religion [as heard] and monopolized, I think that no Algerian man or woman can accept this.

[Correspondent] I am from AL-HURRIYAH. Mr. President, you said that the 1989 constitution does not encompass all the democratic prerequisites, but it was the cause or rather one of the causes of disorder and tragedy. Would it be possible to be informed, even briefly, about this? Second question, Mr. President: In spite of your interest in the consolidation of a pluralistic press, this occupation is still confronted, in reality, by a number of regulations which limit the freedom of the press, such as administrative seizure, judicial prosecution, which are not justified most often. Are there any regulations which limit the activity of the press within the framework of the law and transparency as you have mentioned in your address? Thank you.

[Zeroual] Thank you. You know that the 1989 constitution, brothers, was drawn up under special circumstances, and it came after the 1988 events. It introduced hastily and in an unorganized way, pluralism in our country, without giving firm constants for its implementation. I, personally, consider this as one of the causes which contributed to the misinterpretation of the concept of pluralism in our country, and gradually led us to the present situation. [passage omitted]

As I have already said, the details will appear in the memorandum which will be sent out to the political parties and all those who took part in the preliminary consultations. Your second question please.

[Correspondent] [passage indistinct]

[Zeroual] I tell you quite frankly, I read our national press every day, and personally I am proud of the pluralism which exists in the national press. I cannot talk about democracy in our country without talking about the freedom of expression. If we compare ourselves with many other states, I believe that the Algerian press is a pluralistic press and a free press in the full sense of the word. I read the Arabic-language and the French-language newspapers and I can see what they contain. Personally, in 1995, when I received some officials from the national press, I used this language with them and told them: Our press must be really free and it must be a press which serves the national interest. It must have the right to criticize, criticize constructively, at whatever level, in order to enlighten our people about the reality of the situation in our country. You must also enlighten the people about the officials who are assuming the responsibility and who are speaking on their behalf. *Therefore, freedom of expression, as far as I am concerned, has no limits. The only limits,* and I think that as journalists who have been exercising this profession for many years, you know this very well, the limits to the freedom of the press are the things which affect public interest and the national interest.

As I have already said, I am proud of the pluralism and the freedom which the press enjoys in our country.

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However, sometimes it pains me to see some papers carrying reports which are totally unfounded, especially as such reports affect the country and not individuals. Regarding the freedom of the press, nobody in our country will be able, in the future, to reverse this gain because I personally consider it as a gain, just like the pluralistic political democracy. Without freedom of expression we cannot talk about democracy or political pluralism.

Likewise, I personally urge the national press to assume their responsibilities towards the nation, not towards individuals. I personally do not want our press to be a press praising those in positions of authority. On the contrary, the press should criticize them, but criticism should be objective, constructive. We should shun prejudice. [passage omitted]

[Correspondent] We are currently witnessing a French diplomatic offensive in the Mediterranean. May we ask for your view on this issue?

[Zeroual] This question should be posed to the French. I cannot comment on an action carried by another state. But if you ask me what Algeria is doing in the Mediterranean, I would say that, regarding the construction of the Arab Maghreb, we in Algeria believe that our relations with Europe should be strong, because, as you know, Europe is our first economic and trade partner.

If we wish to build the future of all this region, we should not build it on trade partnership only. This principle Algeria has defended for many years. Praise be to God, the European countries and some of the countries on the southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea have gradually started to accept this principle. What does our principle say? It says we should not have trade partnership only. Genuine partnership should be in the political, security, economic and social fields.

This idea materialized over many years and, praise be to God, culminated at the Barcelona Conference. Today, the European countries and those states on the southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea are working towards this goal. Algeria played an important role during preparations for the Barcelona Conference. Algeria was asked to coordinate the stances of all Arab countries on the southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Algeria is still playing an important role in achieving a genuine partnership between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, a partnership which is based on mutual respect and non-interference in our internal affairs. These are the principles of our foreign policy. This partnership should also be based on mutual interest. Algeria holds winning cards in this respect and is capable of playing and determined to play a real role in the region. [passage omitted]

[Correspondent] The situation in the Algerian Sahara is quite particular, especially concerning the states bordering the Sahara. Could you give us some clarifications as to what extent the situation is under control?

[Zeroual] Regarding the situation in the Saharan Sahel, you all know that this region is very sensitive, a region that has witnessed and is still witnessing unrest in some countries. But Algeria is always loyal to the basic principles of its foreign policy and its policy of positive good neighborliness. Algeria works with all the countries of the region to intensify cooperation in all domains. Our relations with all the countries of the Saharan Sahel are based on trust, cooperation, and solidarity. Algeria is helping these brothers who are going through very difficult times. It has never hesitated to offer the necessary help to these states, because, like our views on the Arab Maghreb, we consider that we are linked to the countries of the Saharan Sahel by history, the present, and the future.

It is necessary that stability and security prevail in all the countries; this is very important for Algeria. This is our duty, and we are doing our best to build up the Arab Maghreb Union, as well as to consolidate and transform our relations with all the countries of the Saharan coast.

[Correspondent] You mentioned in your speech the new national order before the elections and after the elections when it was consolidated with implementation. If this new national order is based on the general economic and national recovery and the reformation of the democratic process, do you not think that this national order needs a political support? Also, the Western democratic experience has proven that the written press in the public sector is useless whether with regard to the processing of information or its credibility because it is influenced by a certain line and guided towards a certain direction, would you consider freeing media practices in its written form? Thank you. I am Benhamouda from AL-SALAM newspaper.

[Zeroual] The origins of the national recovery process are the principles and values of the Glorious November Revolution. I personally believe that we have deviated from these principles and values. If we had not deviated probably the country could have avoided a lot of obstacles and difficulties. [passage omitted]

[Correspondent] Mr. President, daily practice shows that the fact that the state-controlled press is bound to follow a certain editorial line...

[Zeroual, interrupting] What do mean by a certain editorial line? You should be specific.

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[Correspondent] This press cannot compete with the privately-owned press, or what is termed as the independent press.

[Zeroual] Look, speaking about the economy we mention the private sector and the public sector, but, regarding the press, to me there is no privately-owned press and publicly-owned press. To me, there is a national press which, as I have already said, is completely free to enlighten our people about what is going on in the country. The press has also another duty: in its articles and analyzes it should take into account the national interest, I stress: national interest, not the interest of individuals. This is what I hope for our press. Differentiating between publicly-owned press and privately-owned... [pauses] To me there is no difference whatsoever. We have a national press. When the papers EL WATAN, Al-SHA'B, or EL MOUDJAHID are seen abroad, people just say these are Algerian papers.

[Correspondent] Mr. President: I have a question which is worrying me and I would like to put it to you. Since the creation of the High State Council, we noticed that there was something akin to a multiplicity in the power structure. Have you really put an end to the centers of power within the system and are you now the one in charge? This is my question.

[Zeroual] No. First answer me: Who is in charge in this country? Look, this is one of the things I was talking about, brethren, namely that people listen to what is being said abroad and what some tendentious circles say — that in Algeria there is the visible power and the hidden power. What is this visible power and this hidden power? If anyone has clear evidence about this, namely that in Algeria there is a visible power and a hidden power, let them present it, not to me, but to the Algerian people. Let them then say: Here is the evidence which proves that in Algeria we have a strange power structure of a visible power, embodied in the president of the republic, and another hidden power.

I would like to reaffirm this to you, brethren, and I have already said this when I was head of state, and I am not just saying it now that I am president of the republic who enjoys the credibility [as heard] of the majority of the Algerian people: All the decisions concerning the country are made by me. I take them on my responsibility, naturally after consulting the brethren who are with me. This is done in all the states of the world *otherwise I become a dictator* if I make decisions on my own without consulting anybody. But these tales about the visible power and the hidden power, I can tell you that all these are part of the venom which has been injected into the body of our country in order to sow mistrust between people. The day we have a visible power and a hidden power, I personally have enough courage to say it directly to the Algerian people. There is no such thing. There is only one power and there are authorities and every one of us is doing their job and the goal of each one of us is to find a way to bring our country out of this crisis.

[Correspondent] Mr. President, I just want something to be made clear. You spoke about revision of laws on political parties and of the electoral law, but you have not mentioned the Information Code. Was this just an omission, or will there be a revision of the Information Code in the near future?

[Zeroual] I refer you to the document released after the national conference in January 1994. The document speaks about amendment of the electoral law, of the law on political parties and of the law on information. We must amend the law on information, and everybody should take part in the drafting of such an amendment. The era of unilateral decision-taking has gone. [passage omitted]

[Belkorm] I am Nadir Belkorm from the weekly EL MOUDJAHID. Mr. President, can the Algerian people hope for a way out of the crisis soon?

[Zeroual] I would like to tell you simply that a people which had embraced and carried the revolution of liberation, the November revolution, and was able to free itself after more than a century of colonialism, a people which could stand a severe crisis such as the crisis the country is suffering from for more than five years, a people which had mobilized itself and proved to the world and gave it a lesson in democracy during the elections of 16 November, a people like this will face nothing but victory regardless of the difficulties. And currently we have started to come out of the crisis. The evidences are available, brothers. [passage omitted]

I believe this was the last question. Brothers, I thank you for all your questions which I believe I had answered with full openness. Before we part, I promise you that at every stage of the dialogue and, whenever there are tangible results, we will meet together like today, God willing, and I will put you in the picture so that you will convey the facts to the Algerian people.

In conclusion, I would like to salute the whole of the national press family and encourage it to serve the people and march ahead in the interest of Algeria and Algeria alone. Thank you. and may God bless you.

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Egypt

Egypt: Mubarak Comments on Sudan, Peace Process, Arab Solidarity

NC0605181496 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1630 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Al-Tur, 6 May (MENA)—President Husni Mubarak has stressed that Egypt did what it could to help Sudan comply with the Security Council resolutions.

Speaking to reporters today after inaugurating the international military hospital in al-Tur, Southern Sinai, Mubarak added: If the Sudanese Government fails to comply with the Security Council Resolutions, I think all countries will tighten the sanctions against it. This is because it is practically impossible for the world to accept the sheltering of terrorists and the launching of their activity from Sudanese territory toward many areas, he added.

President Mubarak added: We are not used to seeing the Sudanese people act this way. I know the Sudanese people are honest, sincere, and patient; I do not know, and cannot understand, what has happened. Are the regime's agencies to blame for this? I think there is no other explanation, he added. [passage omitted]

Asked about the Middle East peace process following the Israeli aggression on Lebanon, President Mubarak stressed that the peace process must continue, the wheel must turn, particularly since this process began when Egypt moved toward peace. Mubarak added: The peace process has already started. Sooner or later it must continue, and we must reach peace. There are forces that do not want peace; we must expect violence and terrorism to take place. However, the march will have to continue, because this is in the interest of populations. We cannot just stand still. Our peoples want to live; we want to develop, and attract investments, and we want to improve the population's living standards. All this can happen only if there is peace.

President Mubarak asked: When did the development process start? He added: It started after Egypt had made peace. Before peace we had nothing. All our resources were eaten up by the four wars, and we lost a great many people. Now, after the wars, we want to live. Post-war development is difficult. I know what wars are like, but I think development is very difficult, he added. [passage omitted]

President Mubarak was then asked about the recent events, which point to the need to regain Arab solidarity, and how far Egyptian efforts have gone, toward that end. He pointed out that closing the Arab ranks is not as easy as one imagines. He noted that before the Gulf war it was agreed to hold an Arab summit in November 1990. Were it not for the occupation of Kuwait, things would have been different now, he added. President Mubarak pointed out that the participation of the entire world in the liberation of Kuwait has divided the Arab world. He added: We, as Arab leaders, are responsible for this and for the rupture within the Arab ranks. Mubarak added: The occupation of Kuwait and the expulsion of Kuwaitis from their land have torn the Arab world apart, because every country went out looking for another country to protect it. He added: Arab strength was shaken. To regain Arab solidarity, the media must help and people must stop trading verbal abuses that have no benefit other than augmenting inter-Arab differences.

[In a similar report, Cairo Radio in Arabic at 1730 GMT adds: "President Husni Mubarak has announced that contacts are currently under way to hold a tripartite Egyptian-Jordanian-Palestinian summit. He added that the summit is expected to be held next week."]

Egypt: Islamic Group Proposes Initiative To End Violence

NC0605134096 Cairo AL-SHA'B in Arabic 3 May 96 p 1

[Dawud Hasan report]

[FBIS Translated Text] In an attempt to close the file on mutual bloody violence between the Islamic groups and the government, which has escalated very seriously since 1993, Khalid Ibrahim, amir of the Islamic Group [IG] in Aswan, has taken the initiative of calling on all members and leaders of the groups to lay down arms, stop bloodshed, promote Islam by setting a good example of behavior, and open a dialogue with the government. This came in a statement he delivered during his trial on 5 April.

Muntasir al-Zayyat, the lawyer defending the Islamic groups in cases of violence, has told AL-SHA'B that leaders of the IG and al- Jihad abroad who have been contacted welcomed the initiative of the Islamic Group's amir. He said that they are studying this initiative in an encouraging way and will issue a statement within a few days as an official response that will mark the final end to acts of violence. Within this framework, all acts of violence against the police and targets in Egypt, monitored by the groups in preparation for attack, will cease. He noted that the attack on the Greek tourists in al-Haram Street, al-Jizah, and the recent death of three officers and a soldier in Mallawi happened before this initiative was announced.

Al-Zayyat added that a large number of IG youths and leaders have joined Khalid Ibrahim in his call to stop

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the violence. He said: The IG is taking the initiative in light of the current international and regional situation surrounding the nation and in order to confront the U.S. and Turkish alliance with the Zionist enemy, the encirclement of Iran, and the attacks on the Islamic resistance in the occupied territories. All these changes prompt us to stop acts of violence, save resources, and stop the bloodshed.

Al-Zayyat went on to say: The agreement was made unilaterally, so as to allow the religious and intellectual elites and other opinion leaders to intervene again and achieve what is good for the country.

On the chances of the initiative's success, specially as a former similar one failed, he said: This initiative has very good chances of success, judging from the fact that the IG has taken it.

Egypt: Editorials Comment on UN-Iraq Talks, EU Role in Peace

NC0705073896 Cairo MENA in English 0710 GMT 7 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, May 7 (MENA)—AL-AHRAM commented in its editorial today on the new round of UN-Iraq oil-for-food negotiations and said:

The new round underlines the necessity of finding a decisive end to these negotiations.

This is because Iraq, which responded to United Nations' demands and reached a preliminary understanding, was surprised by new British and American demands, the paper said.

These demands have been akin to fault-finding to provoke Iraq and frustrate agreement between it and the United Nations.

In actual fact, conditions, undergone by the Iraqi people under the embargo imposed on their country are no longer tolerating acts of fault-finding, the paper said.

It is necessary that the major powers should maintain their credibility on the Arab and international scenes and take into consideration the point that broad sectors of Iraqi people are coming under tragic food and health conditions due to the embargo imposed on Iraq.

Though the oil-for-food formula is only a temporary and partial solution to conditions of the Iraqi people under the embargo, it will ultimately mitigate the Iraqis' suffering.

AL-AKHBAR said editorially today that:

Member-states of the European Union [EU] are beginning to recognize that their absent Middle East role is an error that should be redressed.

This is to be done due to the importance of the Middle East region to Europe in particular and to the world in general.

Fitting within this context is a European troika delegation's visit that took Cairo as the first leg of a Middle East tour comprising both Jordan and Lebanon.

The delegation had a meeting with President Husni Mubarak and Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa where emphasis was laid on the necessity of establishing an Egyptian-European agreement on working out a common strategy for handling the issue of the Arab-Israeli peace, to be referred to the meeting of the foreign ministers of the Mediterranean basin countries, scheduled within the coming few days in Italy.

Libya

Libya: Foreign Ministry Makes Statement on U.S. Terrorism Report

LD0605232296 Tripoli JANA in Arabic 1830 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Tripoli, 6 May — The General People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation has issued a statement on the U.S. State Department's 1995 report on forms of terrorism in the world. Following is the text:

The American State Department annual reports, statements expressing official American point of view, and remarks of American officials have regularly piled up accusations against and pointed threats in various forms and means towards a number of countries in an attempt by various American administrations to install themselves as a guardian of world affairs out of a tendency of arrogance and disrespect even of its allies, practicing, simultaneously, a policy of hegemony over international organizations with the aim of exploiting them to serve the American policy.

The U.S. Administration's attempts to impose its will on the peoples of the world and its organizations in a number of measures, part of which are the following:

1. The use of economic terrorism, reflected in the numerous American laws which contravene international agreements and conventions. Imposing an economic embargo on a number of states and economic institutions in order to serve the selfish interests of the United States of America.

2. Using the weapon of assistance and credits to twist the will of nations to follow the American policy schemes.

3. Exerting pressure on international organizations by withholding contributions, not complying with interna-

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tional resolutions, not abiding by international conventions, and disregarding regional organizations' stands and resolutions.

4. Pursuing a selective policy and applying two standards which have become a common phenomenon of American policy. Evidence of this is numerous.

The aforementioned and many others leave no room for any doubt that the United States has, through its tangible and repeated measures, been practicing terrorism in its worst forms including denying the peoples their food and armed aggression.

The amount of hostility harbored by American organs towards Libya and the repeated attempts to involve its name with or without an occasion has become clear to everyone. If it was not so, then why does the United States of America demand Libya to comply with a resolution it had imposed on the Security Council only on the basis of a claim that lacks any evidence while it enables some of its allies to reject and disregard the Security Council's resolutions. Is this not a form of terrorism against international community as a whole?

Despite Libya's continuous fulfillment of its commitments in accordance with international laws and conventions and its serious attempts and ongoing cooperation to find a solution to the so-called "Lockerbie" problem, and supported in its efforts by the majority of states of the world and its regional organizations — despite all this the United States of America insists on accusing Libya of noncompliance with the resolution of the Security Council.

The U.S. State Department's report claims that Libya sponsors and supports terrorism while the American position prevents the United Nations from sending, at Libya's invitation, a fact-finding mission to make sure that there were no facilities nor elements connected with terrorism.

On the other hand, the United States of America sponsors and trains the elements which declare that its objective is to destabilize the regime and stability in Libya by terrorist means. The camps in the state of Virginia are an evidence on that.

The Arab Libyan people, which was not intimidated by the United States' armed aggression against the tranquil cities nor the policy of embargo, threats, and false charges will continue to defend its rights, achievements, and national sovereignty in accordance with international conventions supported by the peoples of the world who believe that dialogue and peaceful negotiations are the optimum method to solve all international disputes and differences.

Mauritania

Mauritania: Interior Minister Dropped in Government Reshuffle

LD0605190496 Paris Radio France International in French 1730 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] There has been a government reshuffle in Mauritania: three prominent figures leave the government. The reshuffle is marked above all by the departure of the interior minister, Mohamed Lemine Salem Ould Dah. No explanation was given for the reasons behind this change. The former interior minister, with a reputation as an Arab nationalist, is reported to have marked his time in the position by his intransigence towards the newspapers. Furthermore, the National Association of the Independent Press has already expressed its satisfaction at his departure and his replacement by Dah Ould Abdeljalil, the former governor of Nouadhibou.

Sudan

Sudan: Al-Turabi Says Door 'Still Open' for Rebels To Return

EA0105171596 Omdurman Republic of Sudan Radio Network in Arabic 0430 GMT 1 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Dr. Hasan Abdullah al-Turabi, speaker of the National Assembly, has stressed the revolution's keenness to build relations with brothers and friends all over the world. He said Sudan believed in using dialogue to resolve internal and external problems. Dr. Turabi said the door was still open for anyone bearing arms to return and join the development and reconstruction of the country.

Sudan: National Assembly Approves Peace Deal With Rebel Factions

EA0605203196 Omdurman Republic of Sudan Radio Network in Arabic 1900 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The National Assembly resumed session today under the chairmanship of Dr. Hasan Abdullah al-Turabi, the speaker, following the 'Id al-Adha and Hajj holiday, which lasted for nearly a month.

The National Assembly today approved by consensus the political peace charter recently signed with the two factions led by Dr. Riack Machar and Kerubino Kuanyin Bol. The assembly (?blessed) the political peace charter stressing that it was a bold and major step which proved that peace emerges from within and from the genuine wish and determination of the Sudanese people.

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The assembly urged the government to seek to transform the points of the charter into a comprehensive peace agreement and to utilize and accept the efforts of the people of the south where some factions have not yet joined the peace effort. [passage omitted]

Sudan: Report Says al-Turabi Holding Contacts With Israel

NC0605165296 Cairo AL-WAFD in Arabic 28 Apr 96 p 4

[From "The Brothers" page]

[FBIS Translated Text] Sudanese sources have confirmed that secret contacts are now under way between Dr. Hasan al-Turabi and Israel. They said that some Moroccan figures are conducting the indirect contacts between Khartoum and Tel Aviv. The sources also noted that al-Turabi's aim in these indirect contacts is to woo Israel so as to influence the United States not to take an intransigent stand in the Security Council.

The sources said al-Turabi's visits to the United States in the past years and his speech before the U.S. Congress could not have occurred without the approval of the Zionist lobby in the United States, particularly as al-Turabi is hosting a number of Hizballah members. Hizballah is leading the confrontation with Israel in south Lebanon. The sources added that the presence of these Lebanese fighters in Sudan was the card used in the negotiations between al-Turabi and Israeli officials, negotiations that revolved around Israel's attempts to reduce the sanctions on Sudan in the Security Council in return for al-Turabi's detention of the Hizballah fighters in Sudan.

The sources also said that al-Turabi intervened personally to release an Israeli spy arrested in southern Sudan. The spy was deported to Israel at al-Turabi's strict orders.

It is recalled that Mustafa Hamzah, one of the leaders of the Islamic groups in Egypt, said in press statements in Afghanistan that there are sharp differences between the Islamic groups and the Sudanese government. He said the Khartoum government will agree to the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel as soon as Syria does so. He also said the Islamic groups will not accept normalization of relations with the Zionist enemy under any circumstances whatsoever.

Sudan: Iraqis Said Training Sudanese Pilots on Helicopters

NC0605132696 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1145 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Khartoum, 6 May (MENA)—Sudanese press sources have revealed that Iraqi pilots, who had earlier been detained by Jordan [not further specified], arrived in Sudan and started to train Sudanese pilots on advanced helicopter gunships that the Sudanese Government bought from a former Soviet republic.

The magazine AL-MAYDAN, the mouthpiece of the outlawed Sudanese Communist Party, reported that a Russian expert also arrived in Sudan for the same purpose. The helicopters have been transported to the operations zones to halt the march toward Juba, in Southern Sudan.

In another story, the same magazine has reported that members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards as well as "mujahidin" from South Africa, Tanzania, and other African nations will participate in the war in Southern Sudan. The magazine added that troops from the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement [SPLM] killed approximately 13 foreigners of various nationalities who entered Sudan and participated in the ongoing battles in the south. Their bodies are quickly pulled back so that they do not fall into the hands of the SPLM, the magazine added, noting that the participation of foreign troops in the fighting has become a source of resentment among a broad spectrum of [Sudanese] officers and soldiers.

In another development, the magazine reported that more than 80 political detainees continue to be held in the Cooper Prison, despite bragging by the Sudanese Islamic Front's government that the number of detainees in Sudan is less than any other Arab or African country and that there are no political detainees in Sudan.

The magazine published the names of detainees still held in the Cooper Prison, including two Chadians from the National Front for the Liberation of Chad, a group opposed to the regime of Idriss Deby; and seven Libyan fundamentalists arrested at Khartoum Airport in December. The magazine added that these detainees are being tortured at a security building in Bahri area as well as in other buildings in Khartoum affiliated with the executive security [al-amn al-tanfidhi] and operations departments.

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Sudan: Government Delegation's Visit to Kenya Reviewed

EA0505192096 Omdurman Republic of Sudan Radio Network in Arabic 1300 GMT 5 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Musa Sid Ahmad, director general of the Supreme Council for Peace, this morning on the council's premises, held a news conference in which he reviewed the outcome of the recent visit by a government delegation to Kenya.

He said that the delegation had handed over a written message from the president of the Republic, Lieutenant General 'Umar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir, to the Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi.

The message outlined developments in the peace process in Sudan after the signing of the political charter for peace between the government and two rebel factions led by Dr. Riak Machar and Kerubino Kuanyin Bol.

Musa Sid Ahmad said that the message also contained the government viewpoint on steps to be taken in the coming period.

During the news conference he affirmed that the second phase of the political charter for peace offered an opportunity to John Garang's faction to join the peace process, and added that he had made contacts with the Kenyan foreign minister, whom he briefed about the government's endeavors aimed at achieving peace.

The Kenyan minister affirmed his country's concern about achieving peace in Sudan, and he called for the continuation of dialogue within the framework of the Igad [Intergovernmental Authority on Development] initiative.

The director general of the Supreme Council for Peace said that the delegation had met representatives of a number of rebel factions, stressing the government's commitment to the principle of dialogue and peaceful resolution of the conflict.

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Bahrain

Bahrain: 2 Hurt as Bomb Explodes at Bus Station Outside Capital

NC0705061896 Paris AFP in English
0544 GMT 7 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Manama, May 7 (AFP)—Two people were wounded when a time bomb exploded at a bus station outside the Bahraini capital of Manama late Monday [6 May], a newspaper reported Tuesday. The blast also caused damage when it went off under a seat at the station at 9 p.m. (1800 GMT) on al-Muharraq island, northeast of the capital, the AL-AYYAM newspaper said. The international airport is located at al-Muharraq.

Bahrain: Demonstrator Shot by Police 4 May Dies of Wounds

NC0605134696 Paris AFP in English
1303 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Nicosia, May 6 (AFP)—A Shiite Muslim died of wounds he sustained Saturday [4 May] when police opened fire on an anti-government demonstration in a Bahraini village, his family said Monday.

Fadil 'Abbas Marhun, 25, was heading back to his uncle's home in Karzakan, a Shiite village around 20 kilometers (12 miles) southwest of the capital Manama, when he was hit by a police bullet, a family member said.

"The police called us this morning to tell us he died and that he was buried," she said, adding that Marhun was not involved in the demonstration that the police were trying to break up.

With the latest death, at least 22 people have died in anti-government unrest that has swept this Gulf Arab archipelago for the past 17 months and has been led by Shiite Muslims demanding a restoration of parliament.

The Sunni-led authorities suspended the assembly in 1975.

Bahrain: Confrontation of 'Blind Terrorism' Urged

JN0605180696 Manama WAKH in Arabic
1045 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Manama, 6 May (WAKH) — The Bahraini newspaper AL-AYYAM called for a strong and firm stand against the alien, rancorous elements that tried to shake the confidence in the spirit of amity that permeates the one family that lives in this good land, which all pledged to preserve and cherish.

Commenting on the dark and blind terrorism practiced by this rancorous group, the paper says: If we do not confront this group to emphasize and protect the spirit of amity, history will stigmatize us, both as individuals and as a group, with disgrace because we failed to save the homeland from their schemes. Silence will not be of any use. All groups and individuals in society are urged to reciprocate the favor that was done for them and that can be denied only by the ungrateful ones.

AL-AYYAM adds: The fires that erupt will not spare anyone. It is about time for us to shoulder our common responsibilities toward saving our homeland, because their goal — which is destroying the homeland — movements, and actions are very clear and cannot be justified. Remaining silent is a betrayal of the homeland.

The paper adds: The rancorous group was displeased by the happiness that was evident on people's faces during 'Id al-Adha, while they were picnicking and seeking a secure and happy life. The group was displeased by all that is beautiful, including the homeland and the civilization. They spitefully set fires to public and private property. Through this, they sought to restore the false aura that was given to them by the suspect mass media, which embellished their disgraceful actions and even accused other parties of carrying out these actions in a display of obsolete theatrics.

The paper notes: We are not facing a group of demagogues. We are facing a terrorist organization that operates according to the ugly methods of terrorism. Its action is based on determination, planning, and instructions received from outside commanders, whose hideouts are well known to all.

The paper concludes: The slogans they raised are false and convinced none of our people. The actions they carried out were rejected by our people. When the noose started to tighten, their black hands tampered with the people's sources of living and property in a bid to undermine the people's achievements in a homeland that gives everybody a chance to work efficiently.

It adds: This malevolent group, which seeks to burn our homeland and people, will not be able to undermine the homeland's achievements. This homeland's leadership and people are unified by the spirit of productive work and construction and with the amity of a single family that everybody pledges to preserve and cherish. The alien and spiteful group will not succeed in shaking the confidence in this family.

The newspaper AKHBAR AL-KHALIJ says: It has become obvious to everyone that the issue of the saboteurs and those who tamper with the security of the homeland, its citizens, and the people who reside there

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has nothing to do with the demands for jobs, improved facilities, increased gains, or solutions to problems. The intentions and aims of these saboteurs were clearly revealed when they became addicted to sabotaging the accomplishments of the homeland and undermining its gains and advancement by burning and tampering with the property of their families and the lives of their kinsfolk with whom they share their destiny and goals. However, these maniacs could have cared less about feelings of allegiance, loyalty, and love. They harbored nothing but hatred, malice, and grudge toward their people and homeland and committed crimes against their fellow citizens.

The paper says: The fires that were intentionally set by malevolent people were a desperate attempt to undermine Bahrain's successful achievements in all areas. This handful of people wanted to take revenge on the Bahraini people, who condemned their actions and demanded that they be punished. The people of Bahrain rallied around their leadership to safeguard the security of their homeland and to achieve development. These efforts were praised by all international organizations, experts, and the heads of governments who visited Bahrain and voiced their admiration for this homeland's successful experience.

AKHBAR AL-KHALIJ points out that the handful of saboteurs and rancorous people should have joined forces with their fellow citizens to achieve development and prosperity. They should — along with the loyal masses — have helped entrench the experience of establishing modern institutions and the apparatus the state is seeking to promote in order to herald a new era of welfare and prosperity. As a matter of fact, they should have shared with the people of this country their joy on the 'Id and should have sought — along with all the good people of this homeland — to live the joy of the blessed 'Id al-Adha holiday, when happiness spread all over the country where public parks, squares, and museums were crowded with people enjoying the blessing of living in security and peace.

Instead, this handful of saboteurs preferred to deprive people of joy by setting fires and spreading destruction. They decided to do this after they saw that 'Id, to the Bahraini people, means serenity, renewing allegiance, and showing loyalty. Therefore, these spiteful people left their hiding place and desperately tried to tamper with the property of civilians and the possessions of the peaceful people not deterred by religion or love for family and homeland.

The paper adds: These spiteful people were stripped of their dignity by turning their backs on the peaceful people of their homeland. They were blinded by the darkness of sedition and by their own plight. Therefore, they became fuel for the fire of the coveters who embellished their actions and encouraged them to destroy their homeland and harm their people. They will reap nothing but failure and will eventually be cast out by their people.

AKHBAR AL-KHALIJ concludes that Bahrain will remain steadfast and confident thanks to its people and kinsfolk who seek to achieve advancement and prosperity with open mind and sharp insight. This way Bahrain will triumph today and tomorrow. The losers will gain nothing except the stigma of malice and terrorism after they are disbanded by sedition. They are doomed. Their ongoing treachery and criminal trends will lead them nowhere except to a just punishment. Ignorance has distorted facts before their eyes and has confused them so they have become the enemies of themselves, their kinsfolk, and their homeland.

Kuwait

Kuwait: Talks With Iraqi Officials on POWs To Be Held 6 May

LD0505163296 Kuwait KUNA in Arabic 1500 GMT 5 May 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Kuwait, 5 May — Representatives of Kuwait and of the pro-Kuwait alliance will tomorrow hold talks with representatives of the Iraqi regime on the Kuwaiti side of the Kuwait-Iraq border, on the follow up of examining the fate of over 600 Kuwaiti prisoners held in Iraq.

The talks, presided over by the International Committee for the Red Cross, will be held within the framework of the 13th sectorial technical commission held once a month until the end of September [1996] on the Kuwait-Iraq border. [passage omitted]

Iraq has answered, up to now, 130 prisoner-cases and acknowledged that they were imprisoned during its occupation of Kuwait in 1990.

The Iraqi answers were laconic and evasive and in its turn, Iraq was asking for additional explanations according to Kuwaiti and alliance representatives.

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Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia: Saudis Voice Hopes To Join WTO Next Year

MS0305140596 London FINANCIAL TIMES in English 3 May 96 p 4

[Report by Frances Williams: "Saudis Start Talks on Joining The WTO"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Geneva — Saudi Arabia yesterday began negotiations with trading partners on its bid to join the World Trade Organisation [WTO]. The talks are expected to last well into 1997 or beyond — though Saudi officials yesterday said they hoped for entry next year.

The oil-rich kingdom, which ranks as the world's 26th largest exporter, is seeking WTO membership mainly as a way to expand markets for its manufacturing exports, notably petrochemicals.

"It is a question of marketing our petrochemicals, which face a lot of trade restrictions in various European countries as well as in the U.S.," said a Saudi diplomat.

Saudi Arabia applied to join Gatt, the WTO's predecessor, in July 1993 but these negotiations had made little progress by the time the WTO was created in January last year. Yesterday was the first meeting of the WTO's working party on Saudi membership.

Saudi Arabia hopes to join the WTO as a developing country, which will give it more leeway in applying some of the organisation's fair trade rules. But trading partners yesterday raised various concerns, including access for farm goods, non-tariff barriers to imports and export subsidies.

The U.S., which has put Saudi Arabia on its "watch list" for violations of intellectual property rights, is expected to press Riyadh to adopt tough legislation to enforce copyrights, patents and trademarks.

Of the six members of the Gulf Co-operation Council, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emerates [UAE] are already WTO members. Oman has not yet applied. Membership negotiations for the UAE, the latest to join, took nearly two years.

Saudi Arabia: Editorials Criticize U.S. Support for Israel

LD0605161096 Riyadh SPA in English 1248 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Riyadh, May 6 (SPA) — The Saudi Arabic language newspapers today commented editorially on a number of local, arab and international issues.

The Jeddah-based UKAZ newspaper criticized the recent statements of U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher about the capability of Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad to go ahead on the path of the peace process.

'Christopher and the U.S. are aware of the fact that Syria and its president Hafiz al-Asad have never hesitated in marching on the peace track and contributing to the peacemaking process because they believe that just and comprehensive peace based on the principle of land in return for peace has become an essential matter for the service of the interests of all parties in the Middle East,' the daily said.

'It will be more appropriate for Christopher to criticize Israel rather than Syria,' it added.

The daily pointed out that Israel and not Syria is the party that has been hesitating in implementing the articles of peace agreements.

'The unjustified war launched by Israel against Lebanon stands as a witness for the intransigence of the Jewish state,' the daily said. 'Such a behaviour of Israel has shaken the Israeli credibility and casted doubts on its keenness on realization of peace,' he said.

On the same topic, AL-BILAD, which is also published in Jeddah, said the peace process in the Middle East actually started on October 30, 1991 during the Madrid peace conference, which was attended by Palestinians and Israelis under the patronage of the concerned parties, but the proper negotiations for realization of just and lasting peace began in real terms in Taba only yesterday.

'No doubt, the peace process is now passing through the most critical stages because the talks are now being focused on the final status of situation for the occupied Palestinian territories,' the daily said.

The peace talks will be undermined if Israel tries to dictate its will on the Palestinians and force them to sign an incomplete peace agreement, it noted.

The Jeddah-based Al-MADINAH deplored the absolute American support to Israel and said during the recent Israeli attack on Lebanon Washington had never uttered even one word to criticize Israel.

The decision-makers in Washington should take into account that it would be an impossible goal for Washington to play the role of mediator in the light of its clear, open and actual backing for Israel, the daily noted.

'Washington's continual disregard to the interests of the Arabs will pave the way for further unrest,' it added.

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AL-RIYAD criticized the failure of the Arabs to analyze the crises facing them.

'Unlike Israel, we lack in the Arab world scientific studies on our internal and external problems,' the daily said. 'Israel has accurate information about the Arab armies, leaders and potentialities.'

'No Arab foreign ministry or an Arab intelligence department has informed us how the disaster of the Gulf war took place, or what is going on inside the Israeli institutions or even how a small country like Eritrea, which used to depend on the Arab support, has turned inot a country that defies Yemen and settles its dispute with it through military force,' the daily elaborated.

The Riyadh-based AL-JAZIRAH deplored the subversive acts recently witnessed by Bahrain and said such terrorist acts would, no doubt, undermine the infrastructure in Bahrain.

'These terrorist acts indicate that it is not only Bahrain, but also the other GCC [Gulf Cooperation Council] member states, which are exposed to criminal and subversive acts,' the daily said.

'The development achievements accomplished by the GCC member states might have stirred the anger of the spiteful quarters that view with jealous eyes the development and progress attained by the GCC states,' it added.

On a domestic topic, the Mecca-based AL-NADWA said the appreciation of Custodian of The Two Holy Mosques King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz Al Sa'ud and Crown Prince 'Abdallah Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz to the efforts exerted by the information media for the coverage of the piglrimage season will be an incentive for the information men to realize further achievements.

With the fine coverage of the haj season this year, the information media is actually projecting the achievements accomplished in the country either for the service of the citizens or for the service of the pilgrims, the daily elaborated.

The daily called on the intellectuals and thinkers to exert further efforts for the protection of the society from alien ideas.

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Iraq: Al-Samarrai Views Current Situation in Iraq

BR0605123496 Rome IL MESSAGGERO in Italian 5 May 96 p 12

[Interview with former Iraqi Security Services chief Wafiq al-Samarrai by Valerio Pellizzari in Amman, Jordan; date not given: "Saddam's Days Are Numbered Now"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted]

[Pellizzari] How much longer will Saddam remain in power?

[al-Samarrai] Two months are enough these days to organize a military revolt and bring him down. A more broad-based internal operation bringing together Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds would take four months. But these three opposition elements need the approval of the United States, the West, and the Gulf countries. In any case, the UN embargo that has driven the Iraqi people to the end of its tether must go on. If the embargo is raised, the map of the region will change at once.

[Pellizzari] Will Saddam agree to resign in the face of a political solution?

[al-Samarrai] Never in 100 years will he yield to anything but force. I know him well. I met him every day for years. "We are here to stay," he said back in 1968, and he has been saying so ever since.

[Pellizzari] What changes have there been in the president's family circle since General Husayn Kamel and Saddam Kamel, Saddam's sons-in-law, were killed in February?

[al-Samarrai] He only has his two sons with him. I found out a week ago that he has had 31 of his cousins imprisoned. No one trusts anyone any more in the presidential palace. There is really a murky atmosphere.

[Pellizzari] But why on earth did the traitors who had fled to Jordan trust in Saddam's pardon?

[al-Samarrai] Their flight, return, and death have been highly instructive. Kamel had been used to power and money. When he arrived in Jordan, he realized that he no longer had a role, his qualities, which had been inflated by promotion on family grounds, were cut down to size, he began to get depressed, and in the end he thought that his marriage to Saddam's daughter was a guarantee of immunity.

[Pellizzari] There is Barzan al-Takriti, Saddam's half-brother and the real handler of his wealth, in Geneva. How much money is he managing?

[al-Samarrai] Several dozen billion dollars, without any doubt. But even their relations have turned sour.

[Pellizzari] Why is the Iraqi opposition so fragmented?

[al-Samarrai] It is true that we are divided, but there is an enormous practical problem as well. We have no funds, and we are scattered throughout many countries. It is difficult to maintain contact when you work outside a country where the same man has always been in command for 28 years and where the military academy textbooks bore an inscription on the front page reading: "Anyone who joins another party will be killed."

[Pellizzari] Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan are particularly hospitable toward the Iraqi opposition. What do they want in exchange?

[al-Samarrai] We are not card players, and we refuse to act as reserve cards in other peoples' games. We take the help they give us, but it is always less help than might be imagined from the outside.

[Pellizzari] How many Scud missiles does Iraq have left?

[al-Samarrai] Forty, of those that can mount chemical, biological, or conventional warheads. There are about 15 biological warheads. We had over 1,000 missiles in the past.

[Pellizzari] There is a major question mark hanging over the Gulf War. How many men died in the retreat from Kuwait?

[al-Samarrai] Saddam still does not know the figure, not least because there was a large number of deserters. My estimate is over 100,000 dead.

[Pellizzari] Which Western country gave Saddam the greatest help in manufacturing chemical weapons?

[al-Samarrai] Germany.

[Pellizzari] Do you mean Communist Germany?

[al-Samarrai] No, Bonn's Germany. They helped in two ways: by supplying the technology, as was known, and also by sending their experts to work in Iraq, in our laboratories.

[Pellizzari] What was the greatest mistake that the Americans made in Iraq?

[al-Samarrai] Stopping the war. They should have carried on until they brought Saddam down, but they think what the West and the Gulf countries think. They believe Saddam is a means of containing Iranian fundamentalism. But Iran is not such a great hazard. I was in charge of the whole spy network in Khomeini's day, and I know them well.

[Pellizzari] Why were the UN inspectors unable to go into the Agriculture Ministry in Baghdad in the past?

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[al-Samarrai] Because that is where the secret documents on the chemical warfare projects were really kept. I am sure that those documents were subsequently moved to the private homes of many officials. They could not go in as a matter of principle as well. Saddam knew that once he gave in, he would never be able to forbid an inspection again.

[Pellizzari] The documents taken by the Kurds during the 1991 revolt in Kirkuk refer to the Human Massacre Unit and the Suweira depots. What do you know about them?

[al-Samarrai] The latter is a place south of Baghdad where there are nuclear and biological research laboratories and other secret installations. Saddam killed at least 6,000 opponents in Baghdad, and my officers saw dozens of people with their hands bound taken to the salt lake of Tharthar, 100 kilometers from the capital, where they were killed in cold blood.

[Pellizzari] Does the system for checking out the public's loyalty still involve five different organizations?

[al-Samarrai] There are now four checks, because the army's secret service and the security service have been merged. But it is the whole system that is crumbling.

[Pellizzari] Which is Iraq's weakest frontier?

[al-Samarrai] They are all weak now. You can get away in any direction.

[Pellizzari] Which did you choose when you got away?

[al-Samarrai] The frontier with Kurdistan. I stopped the car at night and started walking, with three trusted guards.

Iraq: Oil Talks With UN To Resume 'Later Tonight'

JN0605171996 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1645 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] United Nations, 6 May (INA) — Later tonight, Baghdad time, Iraqi and UN delegations will start the fourth round of talks on the exchange of oil for food, medicine, and other basic needs.

Ambassador 'Abd-al-Amir al-Anbari, head of the Iraqi delegation, is expected to arrive in New York this evening to lead the Iraqi delegation to the fourth round.

Deputy Prime Minister Tariq 'Aziz told INA yesterday that it was agreed with the UN secretary general to resume the talks between Iraq and the United Nations today. He said the chances for the success of the fourth round depends on the readiness displayed by the Security Council and the UN General Secretariat to curb U.S. and British interference and to give the Iraqi and UN delegations the opportunity to arrive at an acceptable agreement.

Iraq: Second Session of UN Talks To Be Held 'This Evening'

JN0705110396 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1040 GMT 7 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] United Nations, 7 May (INA) — As part of the fourth round of dialogue on oil for food, medicine, and other basic needs, Iraqi and UN delegations will hold a second session this evening, Baghdad time.

The two sides held the first session yesterday evening. Dr. 'Abd-al-Amir al-Anbari, head of the delegation, told journalists the session was devoted to organizing procedures for convening the next sessions.

Iraq: Damage to Oil Industry Described

96LH0127A Baghdad AL-JUMHURIYAH in Arabic 29 Jan 96 p 4

[Article by Huyam Ahmad: "Effects of the Aggression: 625 Million Dinars Damage to Southern Oil Company"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The al-Janub [Southern] Oil Company's installations suffered heavy damage from the 30-state aggression, which resulted in a total halt to all crude oil and natural gas production, and the loss of production capacity of about 2.5 million barrels per day. A source in the company has indicated that the crude oil production facilities and gas capturing at the southern al-Rumaylah field were the target of damage and destruction estimated at 15 to 95 percent and included the production and gas capturing and water injection stations. In addition, installations at the northern al-Rumaylah field sustained damage estimated at 10 to 40 percent, and a large number of networks and pipe assembly joints at both fields wwere destroyed. The al-Luhays and al-Zubayr fields also sustained heavy damage, as did the installations of the al-Sabbah, al-Nasiriyah, and Maysan fields, which sustained damage ranging from 5 to 40 percent from the cruel aggression, and the treason and perfidy. The source explained that the aggressors' raids caused a decrease in total capacity of the company's crude oil storage facilities in al-Basrah to 900,000 cubic meters, down from about 2.4 million cubic meters before the aggression.. The installations at three pumping stations on the strategic route suffered damage; these were the first pumping station (PS 1), with 40 percent damage; the second pumping station (PS 2) with 90 percent damage, and the fourth pumping station (PS 4), with 80 percent damage. The border station on the Iraqi route through Saudi Arabia suffered total, 100 percent destruction. The source added, in

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connection with the exporting facilities, that the al-Bakr port suffered very severe, 95 percent damage. The exporting facilities at al-Faw were damaged, and four oil wells in the al-Rumaylah field caught fire.

The source confirmed that the company had authorized production targets in a plan to rebuild in phases, with each attaining targeted phased production capacities, explaining that "the first phase contains a boost in production capacity from a state of total idleness to a capacity of 80,000 barrels of crude oil per day, with the restarting of three gas separation stations and one station processing gas in the north al-Rumaylah field. The second phase aims to achieve a production average and crude oil drawing down of about 400,000 barrels per day, with gas, and the operation of a number of other gas separation stations in the north al-Rumaylah and al-Zubayr fields. The third phase is aimed at rebuilding production stations, storage facilities, pipelines, and various other sites."

Iraq: Oil Exchange, Market Uncertainty

96LH0148A London AL-HAWADITH in Arabic
1 Mar 96 pp 42-43

[FBIS Translated Text] London—International experts in oil affairs in London assert that Iraq's agreement to negotiate over implementation of Resolution 986 concerning the "oil in exchange for food" formula underscores its renewed acceptance of Resolution 986. However, its stalling since that resolution was issued on 14 April 1995 is a maneuver designed to achieve propaganda and pragmatic objectives. In this regard, the Iraqi regime's propaganda objective is an affected demonstration of its protection of its sovereignty. Its pragmatic objective is to beguilingly implement Resolution 986 and thus bring the United Nations and the major countries to accept the exportation of Iraqi oil through the Iraqi Port of al-Bakr, not through the Turkish Port of Seyhan. Iraq hopes that if all of the oil to be exported does not go through the Port of al-Bakr, then at least some of it can in order to get Iraq's oil industry moving again within the possible limits. The Iraqi regime is also trying to signal that it has become worthwhile to suspend UN sanctions against it, even though the major countries, especially the United States and Britain, believe otherwise.

Regardless of the Iraqi regime's maneuvers, goals, and aims, its acceptance of the resumption of the exportation of its oil, albeit according to the UN conditions stipulated in Resolution 986, will affect the world oil market, whether regarding prices or production quotas. Hence, OPEC, in which Iraq is a member, is in a holding pattern. It favors a meeting to study what it must do regarding prices. It also favors the international trend toward relieving the Iraqi people's suffering, which stems from the Iraqi regime's continued obstinacy, which has in effect denied the Iraqi people the oil revenues it needs to import food and medicine.

The Saudi position in this regard best expresses international concern with the sale — pursuant to UN resolution — of a quantity of Iraqi oil, some of the revenues of which would be used to benefit the Iraqi people. This position was expressed by the Saudi Ambassador to the United States, Prince Bandar Ibn-Sultan, who said, on the eve of the start of the recent negotiations between Iraq and the United Nations, "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia believes that eliminating the Iraqi people's suffering is more important then oil and money. Therefore, we hope that the Iraqi leadership will be guided by wisdom and that it will agree to the implementation of Resolution 986 to thereby eliminate the Iraqi people's suffering. However, we note that its previous behavior has not been encouraging. We must not forget the source of the problem and who created the obstacle to helping the Iraqi people."

Prince Bandar also said, "It is among the goals of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to support the elimination of the Iraqi people's suffering as long as people remember who caused it. Neither the United Nations nor the kingdom caused this suffering. Rather, Saddam Husayn did." The ambassador of the Custodian of the Two Holy Places, King Fahd Ibn-'Abd-al-'Aziz, clearly emphasized that Saudi Arabia supports Resolution 986, "and if negotiations are conducted within these limits, I believe that they will be successful." He declared that Saudi Arabia has no problem regarding implementation of the resolution. "The only thing that worries us is revision of it. We reject any revision and accept implementation."

The Saudi Ambassador declared this position after consulting with the UN Secretary-General Dr. Butrus Ghali in New York regarding the new round of negotiations to implement the resolution. The Saudi Ambassador also met with a number of ambassadors of the major countries and the Egyptian ambassador to consult regarding this matter.

Iraq did indeed declare its acceptance of negotiations with the United Nations to implement Resolution 986. It sent its envoy to UNESCO, 'Abd-al-Amir al-Anbari, to New York, where negotiations were conducted amid extensive Iraqi maneuvers to circumvent the resolution and implementation of it in the hope of expanding implementation and reaching something more comprehensive, which is rejected by the United Nations and the countries of the world, especially given the Iraqi regime's failure to fully implement what was required of it after it invaded Kuwait. International sources clearly state

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that the Iraqi regime must pay a price for its flagrant aggression against Kuwait and the Kuwaiti people. Therefore, the blockade against Iraq will continue, but without damage to the Iraqi people and its interests. Hence, the new international tendency to negotiate with Iraq over partial pumping of its oil so long as the profits of these oil sales benefit the Iraqi people, which is beleaguered by the Iraqi regime and the effects of the international blockade imposed on that regime.

If the resolution was implemented strictly according to its primary provision, namely "oil in exchange for food," Iraq would be able to sell $2 billion worth of oil every six months. The revenues of its oil sales would be deposited in a UN-administered account. The money in the account would be used to pay for humanitarian and food requirements. Also, about 30 percent of these revenues would be set aside for damages resulting from the Gulf war and the costs incurred by the United Nations to eliminate Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. Negotiations between the United Nations and Iraq have defined a method for distributing food and medicine and for the United Nations to ascertain that the food and medicine is distributed fairly to all sectors of the population pursuant to the UN resolution.

Iraq has reservations regarding the details of this method, which it believes infringes on its sovereignty. However, if it overcomes these reservations and accepts the offer, it will do so to promote a matter which is more important to it and to Iraqi President Saddam Husayn in particular, namely the lifting of the international sanctions on Iraqi oil exports or the easing of the embargo. This will depend largely on Iraq's compliance with the requirement to disarm. Some diplomatic observers note that Iraq has invited Rolf Ekeus, the head of the commission concerned with eliminating Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, to visit Baghdad. It is reported in New York that Ekeus will send his deputy, Charles Dolfer [as published], an American, and that Ekeus will visit Baghdad after him.

If Iraq and the United Nations reach a comprehensive agreement and the negotiations succeed, oil will begin to be pumped two months after the conclusion of the agreement, pending repair of the Iraqi oil pipeline which passes through Turkey in preparation for Iraq's return to the oil market after an absence of five years. This line connects Iraqi oil fields in Kirkuk in northern Iraq to the Turkish Port of Yumuartalik and, it is reported, the Port of Seyhan on the Mediterranean coast. At the same time, Iraq emphasizes that it has outlets and ports ready and able to receive oil tankers if everything goes according to the agreement.

Regarding OPEC and OPEC oil, despite reports that OPEC lacks a defined policy vis-a-vis Iraqi oil, and that OPEC oil prices will be damaged [by the resumption of Iraqi oil exports], there are nonetheless many areas where Iraqi oil, which will amount to between 700,000 and 800,00 barrels/day, can be marketed at the price at the time of the sale. The experts say that the price of OPEC crude oil will be affected by the quantities of Iraqi oil that enter the market, especially inasmuch as OPEC adheres to an oil production ceiling of 24.52 million barrels/day. The Iraqi oil will put downward pressure on OPEC's production ceiling. The experts expect prices to drop even further than the OPEC oil price drop that occurred immediately after Iraq merely agreed to negotiations on the implementation of UN Resolution 986. The price is expected to reach $12 per barrel unless OPEC lowers its production ceiling to absorb the Iraqi oil. This does not take into account those countries which are not bound to OPEC prices and production quotas because they are not members in the organization, which includes 12 countries, including Iraq and Libya. However, the experts add that the continuing severe winter will force Western markets, especially European markets, to import more oil.

U.S. Secretary of Energy Hazel O'Leary stated that the U.S. administration will permit U.S. companies to import Iraqi crude oil after Baghdad agrees, clearly and without artifice, to the UN conditions, which are based on the principal of "oil in exchange for food." Analysts and traders in Singapore state that Asia can absorb Iraqi oil with a moderate price drop. They emphasize that the oil demand of Asia and the Pacific region will grow by approximately 3.4 percent until the year 2000.

Regarding the countries of the Arab Gulf, Muhammad al-Usumi, an official of the Economic Department in the Emirates Industrial Bank, said that the quantities which Iraq will be permitted to export can be absorbed if the OPEC countries demonstrate discipline. He said that a $1 or $2 drop relative to the average price in 1995 will not greatly affect the budgets of the Arab Gulf countries, because those budgets are calculated based on a price of $14 per barrel.

However, the experts, nonetheless, believe that the return of Iraqi oil will be a new economic and political factor in the region and world, the effects of which will emerge with time.

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Iraq: Construction, Repairs Reported at Shrines

96LH0177A Baghdad ALIF BA' in Arabic 6 Mar 96 p 7

[Article by Dhikrayat Muhammad: "100 Million for Mosque Maintenance and Construction"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The Ministry of Waqf and Religious Affairs has allocated 100 million dinars for the maintenance of a large number of the country's mosques. The ministry has also dispensed 50 kilograms [kg] of gold to repair al-'Abbasiyah Shrine [al-rawdah al-'abbasiyah] and 33 kg of gold to repair al-Husayniyah and al-Haydariyah Shrines in Karbala' and al-Najaf. Moreover, 200 kg of silver have also been dispensed.

Tariq 'Abd-al-Halim, the general director of the Waqf Ministry's Planning and Engineering Division, has said, "Work on al-'Abbasiyah Shrine has been completed. The work has included engraving the facades and the booth with gold pieces and installing the main gate which is made of gold and engraved with Arab and Islamic inscriptions; 50 kg of gold have been dispensed for this work. The work has also included covering these parts with marble and glass-inlaid porcelain.

"Maintenance work has also been completed at al-Haydariyah Shrine in al-Najaf and al-Husayniyah Shrine. This work has included adjacent shops, restaurants, and storehouses, which have been demolished because they do not befit the holiness of the shrines. Moreover, maintenance work has been carried out and porcelain surfaces, gates, floors, ornamental mirrors, and internal ceilings have been renewed. A total of 33 kg of gold and 200 kg of silver have been dispensed for this work."

'Abd-al-Halim added, "The leader president's interest in holy shrines and mosques has also included al-Kazimiyah Shrine in Baghdad, which has undergone maintenance and has been equipped with central air conditioning and power generators. Prophets' and holy men's shrines have also been included. The tomb of Jarir Bin 'Abdallah, one of the prophet's companions, in Diyala governorate and the tomb of Sayyid Ahmad al-Rifa'i in al-Sulaymaniyah governorate have undergone maintenance. The tomb of Imam Zayn-al-'Abidin in la-Najaf has been restored, the tombs of Shaykh Mansur al-Hallaj and Shaykh Juraym in Salah-al-Din have been rebuilt and the tomb of Shaykh Jamil in al-Tarimiyah has undergone maintenance."

'Abd-al-Halim further noted that the ministry is carrying out maintenance work on the tomb of Salman al-Tahir, one of the prophet's companions, and the mosque attached to it. The tombs of prophet's companions Hudhayfah Bin al-Yammam and 'Abdallah Bin Jabir in al-Mada'in are being rebuilt. He added, "We are also rebuilding Talhah Bin 'Abdallah's Tomb and mosque in al-Basrah, the tomb of Imam Anas Bin Malik in al-Shu'aybah, and the tomb of Imam Ibn Hanbal in Baghdad. This is in addition to ongoing maintenance work on tombs throughout the country."

He pointed out that work is underway to rebuild al-Zubayr Ibn al-'Awwam Mosque and its annexes and al-Rabi'ah Mosque in Mosul. Meanwhile, work on the Mosque of Muhammad, Allah's apostle, in Kirkuk and on two mosques in Tikrit has been completed. The cost of maintaining and building these mosques has amounted to 100 million dinars.

Iraq: Central Bank Governor on Prices

96LH0177B Baghdad ALIF BA' in Arabic 6 Mar 96 p 7

[Article by In'am al-'Ubaydi: "Central Bank Governor: Government Tendency Is To Reduce Prices"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Central Bank Governor 'Isam al-Mulla Huwaysh has asserted that the general tendency of government agencies is to reduce prices and decrease obligations that have to be met in the future.

Huwaysh has told ALIF BA', "The government has launched a large-scale campaign to reduce the prices of goods and services it offers. This effort will continue in the future with continued improvement in the economic conditions until a price balance is achieved to compensate the government for a part of the revenues it loses as a result of price reduction. The cost of government activity will decrease. Thus, the government will not need to impose high prices for the goods and services it offers citizens.

Huwaysh also noted that it is certain that the economy is a network of mutual activities and constant effusions. This is why the prices of a part of the economy cannot be reduced without the other parts. Previous conditions dictated that an increase be introduced, whether in fees or in the price of services offered by various government agencies, in order to increase revenues of the state's general budget, to achieve balance in this budget, and to cover the rising cost of government activities.

He also noted that improved Iraqi dinar exchange rates will restore normal conditions and end the special situation imposed by the blockade. Numerous parties have collaborated to impose the dinar's low exchange rate vis-a-vis the dollar and other foreign exchange. Some of these parties are from abroad and some are, very regrettably, from within the country. The latter are embodied in a number of speculators who are only concerned with their personal interests and their

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excessive selfishness, at their people's expense. The main task of the current economic policy is to raise the Iraqi dinar's exchange rate to acceptable levels which we have already determined and which we seek to attain gradually through numerous economic and fiscal measures. We will then seek to attain stability which, we believe, is the ideal environment for work and production and for enhancing the efficient performance of all sectors of the national economy.

As for the currency in circulation, Huwaysh said, "In currency and banking usage, the 250-dinar banknote is not a large denomination. It still befits the market needs and it is in demand. If we examine commodity prices in the markets, whether prices of durable consumer goods or of foodstuffs, we find that this denomination is reasonable and appropriate. Therefore, we have no plan to withdraw it from circulation. It must be noted here that three groups own this denomination:

first, those who maintain their liquid assets with the banking apparatus;
second, those who keep their liquid assets in their private safes;
third, those who converted their dinar assets to foreign exchange to avoid the consequences of inflation and of the drop in the national currency's purchasing power.

There is no doubt that of the above, the group closest to us is the one that maintains its assets with the banking apparatus. Therefore, it must receive the Central Bank's care and attention. This group is followed by those who have maintained their liquid dinar assets and have not converted them to foreign exchange. This group is also close to us. The Central Bank must protect it and protect its assets because it has been in harmony with the currency plan. These two groups have benefited from the latest developments, and this makes us happy, and it confirms the national patriotic vision of this conduct. As for the third group, it acquires foreign exchange for sound import objectives. This group has not been harmed. Regarding small currency denominations, including coins, Huwaysh said their circulation will certainly be resumed, but this will be accomplished gradually with the drop of prices. For February salaries, we instructed that large quantities of the five-dinar denomination and of its fractions be pumped into circulation. This will be done gradually and according to circulation need.

Iraq: Tax Rates Being Reviewed

96LH0177C Baghdad ALIF BA' in Arabic 6 Mar 96 p 7

[Article by In'am al-'Ubaydi: "Tax Authority General Director: "Reexamination of Taxes Next Year"]

[FBIS Translated Text] On the reduction of tax rates in wake of the rising value of the Iraqi dinar, the Tax Authority general director has said that changes in the Iraqi dinar's strength in 1996 will be reviewed when the 1997 estimated taxes are determined. The changes will also be considered in connection with accounts submitted by taxpayers covered by the commercial bookkeeping statute, if the accounts are accepted.

The director added that (estimated taxes are for business and professional activities that take place in the year which follows the fiscal year in which a taxpayer makes profits and is taxed for them. Therefore, taxpayers will be taxed for their activities in fiscal 1995.

He added that for taxable capital gains, estimate of the value of real estate is made by joint committees formed in accordance with amended law No. 85 of 1978. These committees take prices prevalent at the time of inspection and controls established by the authority into their account. The authority is in the process of examining these controls in light of the extent of the impact of the current developments. In light of the above, areas that require examination will be reviewed and the appropriate measures will be taken in accordance with the aforementioned circumstances.

The authority general director urged the citizens that get taxable income, whether they are registered or not, to check with its branches and to submit the required information so their tax position will be determined. He also urged citizens to get in touch with the authority branches in case any problem or any complaint arises so appropriate solutions will be developed in a manner that achieves tax fairness.

Iraq: U.S. Accused of Controlling UNSC Against Iraq

96LH0170A Baghdad ALIF BA' in Arabic 13 Mar 96 pp 10-11

[Article by Rafi' al-Falahi: "When Will Iraq's Blockade Be Lifted?"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The UN Security Council has done it for the 30th time. It has decided to continue the starvation war against the Iraqi people. It has decided to continue the declared war against Iraq ordered by the leaders of evil in the United States, who have not stopped talking about conventions and agreements that

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guarantee the peoples' rights to a better life. What laws permit such collective murder?

Since the oppressive blockade was imposed on Iraq, according to the infamous Resolution 661 on 6 August 1990, the blockade of the evil doers has claimed the lives of tens of thousands of Iraqis. The records of the Iraqi Health Ministry contain shocking statistics about children, old people, women, and others who died of starvation and sickness. These people would not have died had medicine been available. Which international legitimacy allows the killing of the Iraqis? Some officials talk a great deal about legitimacy from the platforms of the United Nations, which approved the international declaration of human rights more than half a century ago. What can we say to the world six years after this distasteful blockade when the Security Council last Thursday ended its 30th periodic review of the blockade and the president of the current session came out to say that the conditions do not exist for lifting the blockade on Iraq?

"Conditions" is a clear word, but no one can understand its meaning in the American-Zionist dictionary. They interpret it in different ways to serve their real objectives in maintaining the oppressive blockade, which 88.5 million kg of explosives dropped on the Iraqis and their main life arteries could not accomplish. This is no longer a secret. Otherwise, how can anyone explain this incrimination and this stubbornness in the face of Iraq's implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions, and primarily Resolution 687, whose 22d paragraph calls for lifting the blockade after the conditions pertaining to the removal of banned weapons have been met? This is indeed happening. Iraq offered all the cooperation, facilities, and information that prove that the task of the inspection teams has been completed, the weapons' files have been closed, and what is left are simple technical issues. These issues cannot negate the fact that Iraq has fulfilled its obligations under Resolution 687 and that the Security Council must fulfill its own obligations and implement Article 22 of the resolution. What is delaying this?

Whoever reviews the events and statements issued by the party that is hostile to Iraq (particularly the United States) whenever the date for the Security Council's periodic review of the blockade approaches will discover that Iraq has fulfilled its obligations. Otherwise, why do they fabricate "false" news and information about weapons believed to exist in Iraq, or about new places that could be discovered here or there in Iraq that could contain something that contradicts Iraq's fulfillment of the UN resolution? Why do they release such reports at this time?

This only shows that the reasons for continuing the oppressive blockade against Iraq can no longer convince the international community and that the search for "fabricated" information or inventing "imaginary" events has become the only way to justify the continuation of their pressure on the Security Council and the international community to "unwillingly" accept the continuation of the blockade on Iraq.

Anyone making a fair review of Iraq's position and its contribution to the fulfillment of the UN Security Council resolutions, led by Resolution 687, must reach the conclusion that the continuation of the blockade on Iraq has no connection with the resolutions issued by the Security Council. This is based on a political and economic determination (primarily American-Zionist) to kill the Iraqis and destroy their country. Anyone who reviews the lists of commodities banned from entering Iraq on the orders of the boycott committee (members of this committee are mostly from the United States and Britain) will find much to be said about the objectives behind that. Otherwise, how can anyone believe, for example, that the exportation of "pencils" to Iraq is a violation of the oppressive blockade? How can anyone believe that the exportation of textiles and children's games to Iraq is something that requires many reviews and exchanges with the boycott committee, which eventually would say that these goods are covered by the sanctions?

If we review the other materials banned by the boycott committee from entering Iraq, we will find that they include water purification materials, medicines, electrical equipment, agricultural pesticides, paper, printing materials, and many others. They deliberately ban these materials not because they are not on the lists prepared according to UN resolutions but because they want to harm the Iraqis.

The United States and its allies in evil have led the campaign against the Iraqis, who, despite the difficult conditions, tried to keep Iraq healthy and able to stand fast. The past few years of the mean aggression and oppressive blockade, which were replete with acts of aggression and inhuman behavior, prove that the reasons for the continuation of the oppressive blockade have become invalid and the despicable games played by some countries, led by the United States, have been exposed, and that the time is beginning to close on the criminals and their ability to continue harming Iraq.

If some people think that Iraq's decision to hold talks with the United Nations about the oil for food and medicine issue (which is a legitimate right) will be a substitute for the lifting of the oppressive blockade, they will be deluding themselves. There can be no substitute

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to the implementation of Paragraph 22 of UN Resolution 687. This would be the important basis for lifting the blockade completely. Iraq's efforts and its people's struggle will soon bear fruit. The lifting of the blockade has become a collective international demand. It no longer depends on the will of the Americans and their allies. This demand can no longer be suppressed after many states have realized the great loss they suffered because of the blockade against Iraq and its people.

Their Misleading Campaign Against Iraq Will Fail

The Western media (particularly the U.S.) launch a misleading campaign against Iraq every time the question of the oppressive blockade against Iraq comes up for review at the UN Security Council. The aim of this campaign is to obstruct any positive move by the UN Security Council to fulfill its obligations under paragraph 22 of Resolution 687 in return for Iraq's fulfillment of its obligations. The latest of these misleading campaigns, which took place as the UN Security Council was holding its 30th session to review the blockade issue, was the claim that Iraq imported spare parts for military aircraft, which were discovered while on their way from Poland via Queen 'Alya' Airport in Amman. What is the truth in this misleading campaign?

The truth in this "fabricated" story cannot be concealed and the documents and correspondence of the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) will surely expose the distortion and malicious objectives of this campaign.

On 18 January, this UN organization sent an official request to the boycott committee, as part of the procedure regarding "uncontested" items of civilian nature. The FAO said that it would like to import spare parts for agricultural helicopters to combat agricultural pests in Iraq. The boycott committee earlier approved a similar request.

The FAO said in its request that the spare parts and materials were for MI-2 agricultural helicopters, that these spare parts will remain under its management during the crop spraying campaign and that its representative in Iraq will supervise their use in coordination with the Iraqi authorities.

The list of spare parts and materials included plastic pipes for engine oil, navigation lights, covers for these lights, filters, batteries, pressure regulators, air compressors, grease, engine oil, and other materials and spare parts that will help in crop spraying.

To clarify this matter, an official Foreign Ministry source stated that the official Jordanian Government spokesman's statement that the Jordanian authorities have discovered spare parts for military aircraft was unfounded. The source gave a description of the spare parts and materials Iraq needed for the agricultural helicopters and said that this was not the first time Iraq has received such materials and spare parts for these aircraft with the knowledge and approval of the United Nations. The source said that the use of these parts in these helicopters, which exist in Iraq, is not prohibited by UN Security Council resolutions, and that every request for parts takes place openly and with the knowledge of the United Nations.

The Agriculture Ministry also expressed surprise about the issue and affirmed that Iraq has obtained parts for these aircraft, through the FAO, throughout the oppressive blockade against it.

This misleading media campaign can only prove its failure and that its purpose was to hamper Iraq's relentless efforts to end the oppressive blockade imposed on it for more than five years. This is particularly true now when Arab and international public opinion and many Arab and world states have begun demanding an end to the oppressive blockade on Iraq and calling on the UN Security Council to fulfill its obligations under Paragraph 22 of Resolution 687 after Iraq proved that it has fulfilled its obligations.

Iraq: Post-War Construction Projects Reported

96LH0176A Baghdad ALIF BA' in Arabic 13 Mar 96 pp 20-21

[Article by Rafal Isma'il: "Projects Built Since Aggression; 21 Projects Born in 1995 With Purely Iraqi Efforts and Expertise; Saddam Tower Is Evident Reflection of Struggle Character of Iraqi Citizens; What Is Story of Bridge 13 in Baghdad"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Throughout numerous centuries, the Iraqis have been gallant and zealous civilization builders; relentless and unbending homeland protectors. Here they are now reaffirming all of the above to the world at the end of the 20th century and confirming with irrefutable proof that they are the progeny of the greatest ancestors. Some of you may wonder: What use is all that we have said?

Come let us pause before some of the miracles the Iraqis have accomplished in the era of the difficult blockade — miracles with which they have penetrated the barrier of time and in which they have reiterated with the leader, "Perish the impossible."

Dozens of new service and irrigation projects have been built in the past four years. Some of these projects have had their resounding reverberations throughout the entire world. They have made the world wonder: How have the Iraqis made this accomplishment while being

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blockaded! This is why we will review with you some of these miracles.

First Miracle: The Great Saddam River

God, may He be praised, says, "We made from water every living thing" [Koran 21:30]. On Iraq's soil and within a channel that extends from northern Baghdad to the beginning of the link with the Arab Gulf, a third brother river of the Tigris and the Euphrates has erupted in the space of six months. Military industrialization strugglers, side-by-side with units from the ministries of agriculture, irrigation, housing, and reconstruction and with a number of private sector firms, carried out the work in this 565-km long river which has a surface width that reaches 100 meters and a bottom width that reaches 50 meters. This is in addition to the enormous installations that have been built on the river, including multi-purpose railroad, vehicle, and pedestrian bridges, pipe culverts, waterfalls, regulators, and water crossings.

As planned, the project serves 6 million donums of land and is considered a model of the project to protect and improve the environment and to bolster the national economy. The project has increased agricultural production and has rid the lands through which it passes of the millions of tons of salt which used to be dumped in the Tigris and the Euphrates by irrigation drains. The project has also helped stabilize shifting sand dunes, considering that 3 million trees have been planted in the lands bordering the river to block away the sands; to spread greenness all along its course; and to create fertile areas for agricultural and livestock production. The lakes created by the project have been used as recreation areas and the river channel has been used for river transportation and fish farming.

Work on the Saddam River began on 25 May 1995 and ended just 180 days later. Therefore, the strugglers who worked on the project and all Iraqis are entitled to be proud of their river. They have proven to the world that they are people of peak accomplishments and that there is no impossible in the face of determined men. It is not easy to dig a river in a blockaded country or to complete a river with the characteristics of Leader Saddam River within a space of no more than months. But in the age of the impossible, this has been accomplished.

Second Miracle: Bridge 13 in Baghdad

A witness to the loftiness and creativity of the beneficent and glorious Iraq is the two-level Saddam Bridge. It is a witness that tells the entire world about the Iraqi mind's creativity in the time of the blockade with which they have sought to stem Iraq's scientific and cultural renaissance, but their hope has been frustrated and the Iraqis have transformed it into tangible reconstruction and development acts which have touched every corner of this gigantic country.

The bridge story began on 15 August 1992 when the first steps were launched to work on the bridge, or let us say when the formation of a new embryo in the motherland's womb was begun. The end of 1993 arrived to witness the birth of that embryo which bore the number 13 because it has become Bridge No. 13 in Baghdad.

The bridge, along with its accesses, is nearly 4.3-km long. Those coming from al-Jariyah district to al-Dawrah cross the lower level of the bridge and those heading for al-Jariyah use the upper level. Each level has three lanes, plus a lane for emergency parking. The bridge's total height is 19 meters. The height between the two levels is 5.3 meters. The bridge has 6,474 concrete supports and a total of 185,000 cubic meters of concrete have been to build it.

Engineers, technicians, administrators, and laborers engaged in building the bridge never stopped working for a year and a half. They rose before sunrise and flocked to the work sites, never departing before sunset. Others arrived in the evening and did not leave until the early hours of the morning. Thus, the strugglers continued their work day and night, racing time to build this unique edifice, with its 100 percent Iraqi design.

With the inauguration of the bridge, our beloved capital, Baghdad, has embraced its 13th bridge. The other 12 bridges were built by foreign firms, thus making this bridge a great Iraqi feat. The bridge was born a giant, like the minds that designed it and that took part in implementing it — minds of Military Industrialization strugglers and great genuine Iraqis.

Mother of Battles River: A Third Project That Has Defied the Impossible

The Mother of Battles Irrigation River has been built throughout the desert extending between Dhi Qar governorate, with its city of rivers and its ancient Sumerian civilization, and al-Basrah governorate, the mother of all cities. On the instructions of Leader President Saddam Husayn, military industrialization strugglers, along with those thronging with them from the ministries of irrigation, housing, reconstruction, oil, industry, and minerals, have built a new Iraqi river with purely national efforts and in record time. Work on the river started on 9 December 1992 and ended on 24 April 1994. Machinery and equipment roared day and night, parting the sands of the desert under difficult conditions to let sparkling water flow in the veins of the land, thus adding 600,000 thousand donums of new arable lands.

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More than 120 million cubic meters of clay, sandy, rocky, and limy soil were excavated and removed from the 108-km long river course, which extends from southern al-Nasiriyah in Dhi Qar governorate to al-Basrah governorate.

A major difficulty encountered by the project was the emergence of rock layers amounting to 17 million cubic meters in the river course. Two million were removed with explosives and the remaining part was crushed and removed with conventional equipment.

River depth reaches 16 meters and the river channel width ranges from 88-95 meters at the bottom and 100-160 meters at the surface.

The strugglers also built 10 bridges and enormous culverts all along the river course and whenever the need dictated it. This is in addition to the efforts exerted to elevate gorges and barriers and to complete Shatt al-Basrah regulator, ensuring operation of the river to irrigate the desert.

Thus, the gallant men have embroidered the map of the great Iraq with a new river that has robed the desert with a green dress of plenitude. Their work has blossomed in abundant offers and in an accomplishment that has dazzled friends and enraged enemies.

Saddam Tower

The highest tower in the Middle East and the first project of its kind was inaugurated in Baghdad on 12 March 1995. This project is the Saddam Tower, a gigantic civilized edifice built by Military Industrialization strugglers with purely national technical expertise and efforts under the umbrella of the continued blockade.

Work on the tower started on 16 September 1992 in implementation of the leader's order to build a tower as a replacement to al-Ma'mun Communications Tower which was destroyed by the 1991 aggression.

The tower consists of two concrete sections with a height of 120 meters, topped by a steel structure with a height of 203.5 meters. It is built on 36 concrete supports. It also consists of three communication platforms, each with an area of 114 square meters; it contains tourist facilities such as coffee shops and a revolving restaurant. From that elevation, one can see Baghdad, the capital.

Thus, the tower has become a dual-purpose installation: A recreational tourist facility for the citizens and an installation for communications, transmission, and radar detection, all of which are beneficial to our country.

The tower is an evident reflection of the citizens' struggle character and of their determination to paint the image of the new Iraq — the source of civilization and its immortal book.

Things did not end here. While the strugglers were working day and night to accomplish these major projects, other strugglers were implementing similar and no less important projects in the various governorates of Iraq. Some of these projects have been completed and others are still under construction.

If we considered the second half of 1995, we would find that the strugglers completed al-Ishaqi drainage canal project and completed the military rock wool plant, which is the first of its kind in Iraq. It is also an important industrial project which has an annual capacity of 3,000 tons, i.e., the equivalent of half a million square meters of heat-insulation mattresses.

A modern furniture plant has also been inaugurated. With a magnificent defiance of the unjust blockade imposed on our proud country, this plant was built to produce 25,000 various pieces of furniture annually.

On 3 May 1995, seven production plants specializing in serving the industrial, agricultural, and health sectors were inaugurated to achieve food security.

The fine aluminum smelting plant, which has an annual production capacity of 50 tons, was inaugurated on 16 May 1995. A number of specialized projects in electronics production were inaugurated on 10 June 1995, including a plant that produces sophisticated Iraqi colored television sets, a manual calculator production line, a videotape production line, and a line for installing electronic components.

The Saddam irrigation project, which is designed to irrigate 1,000 [as published] donums of land extending between Salah-al-Din and al-Ta'mim governorates, was inaugurated on 11 June 1995.

A number of mineral industrial projects were inaugurated on 21 June 1995, embodied in the plant for the production of high-purity lead from discarded batteries, the copper production plant, and the aluminum powder production plant which uses scrap aluminum to meet the needs of the country's thermostone production plants. This plant has a capacity of 100 tons annually.

There are numerous other projects. The projects we have mentioned are only a drop in the ocean of the creative Iraqi intellect's continuous innovation.

Projects for Which the Cornerstone Has Been Laid

All of these projects have been completed. Most of them began offering their services years ago; others began months ago, and still others began days ago. They

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have produced positive results, which have aamazed the entire world and proven the genius of the Iraqi intellect.

In a related development, the cornerstone was laid a few months ago for a number of projects. They include the biggest religious edifice and the most prominent Islamic landmark seen by Iraq, namely the greater Saddam mosque. On 28 April 1995, Leader President Saddam Husayn laid down the cornerstone for this mosque on the occasion of his fortunate birthday.

The greater Saddam mosque will be built on an area of 500 donums. Its sanctuary area will amount to 20,000 square meters and it will accommodate a congregation of 25,000. It will be surrounded by eight minarets, four of which will have a height of 200 meters and the other four a height of 150 meters.

It is certain that the persevering and steadfast men have more innovations in their quiver, and we cannot but expect to see what is more, greater, and prettier.

Greetings and appreciation to every mind, heart, and arm motivated by faith to respond to the call of the national and pan-Arab duty and to prove to those who need further proof that Iraq is great with its people and its faith;

Greetings and appreciation to every drop of sweat shed to build Iraq. Perish the impossible; long live the strugglers, and Allah is the greatest.

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Israel: IDF Commander Meets UN Officer on Qana Incident

TA0605215596 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1900 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Israeli unmanned aerial vehicle [UAV] that was photographed by the UN force over Qana was not there when the refugee camp was shelled. This was made clear by Dan Har'el, the chief Artillery Corp officer, to the UN officer, General (Frank van Kafen) from Holland, who is preparing the report about the incident. At a news conference following the meeting, Brig. Gen. Har'el said that during the shelling the UAV was at a distance of about 2 km from the camp, and it was only after the incident that it was sent to hover over the camp in order to check things out. The chief Artillery Corp officer said Israel did not know that Hizballah members left the refugees' compound and reentered it. He also denied that Israel knew there were civilians in the compound but still fired on them.

Israel: Official Blames UN for Leaking UN Camp Shelling Report

BR0705110096 Hilversum Nederland-3 Television Network in Dutch 2034 GMT 6 May 96

[Interview with Israeli Government spokesman Uri Dromi by Charles Groenhuijsen in Jerusalem on 6 May; from the "Nova" program — recorded, Dromi in English with Dutch subtitles, transcribed from English]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Groenhuijsen] This evening I talked with Israeli Government spokesman Uri Dromi in Jerusalem. I asked him for a reaction to the UN report [on the Israeli shelling of a UN compound in southern Lebanon] and the accusation that Israel did not disclose the complete truth following the incident.

[Dromi] It is really unfortunate that the United Nations came up with this kind of report. As a matter of fact, you know that the report was not even properly presented by the secretary general. It was leaked to the press and then the damage was done already. Not only we haven't lied but I think today all the evidence we have will show that we really told the truth all the time, namely we didn't know that in this compound of the UN there were civilians. Had we known, obviously we wouldn't be shooting at them.

[Groenhuijsen] But how could you overlook hundreds and hundreds of refugees?

[Dromi] Here is another thing that we have a difference of opinion with the UN. We regret the fact that the UN was a bit hasty to leak this report and give support to those false allegations. We started to get word from the UN from day one that there are refugees who come close or into the UN camps. We asked and we tried very hard to get exact figures and exact locations. Unfortunately we were not able to get them. We only got those vague and general answers which really gave us no clue about the precise location and number of the refugees.

This is another thing in which we really have a difference of opinion with the UN. By the way, this amateur video film shows it and it is quite a damming evidence vis-a-vis the UN. We see in the video that there are Hizballah terrorists roaming around free in the UN compound. This is something which is contrary to what the UN is supposed to do. The UN is supposed to stop them. The UN is supposed not to let them launch these Katyushas and mortars. We know now that these atrocities were taking place very close or inside the UN compound. So I think it was wiser not to leak this report, not to give support to these false allegations, but really to go on and investigate it and discuss the things with us more thoroughly. Then I am sure the report would have been more balanced and closer to the truth than it is now.

[Groenhuijsen] Do you expect a condemnation by the UN Security Council in New York?

[Dromi] I hope not. I hope the Security Council will not take advantage of this unfortunate report to push this process into the more negative direction. I think what we need really to do now is to identify the root of all evil and that is the fact that the Hizballah is using the civilians as human shields.

[Groenhuijsen] Thank you very much, Mr. Dromi.

Israel: Peres Pledges To Form Coalition, Reacts to Qana Allegations

TA0605150796 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1400 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Prime Minister Shim'on Peres reacted to the idea that Binyamin Netanyahu will set up a national unity government if he wins the elections by saying that he has no intention of losing the elections. If he wins, Peres will summon all the parties that support what he called suitable political lines, to join a coalition headed by him. If Netanyahu wins, Peres will not join a government headed by the Likud leader. Our correspondent Yuval Yo'az interviewed the prime minister after he met public figures in Ramat Gan.

In reference to claims that there was an Israeli unmanned aerial vehicle [UAV] over Qana during Israel's shelling of the UN camp in south Lebanon, Peres said that the UAV was in the region but not over the village itself. The fact that the UAV was photographed from the ground does not necessarily show that it could

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have transmitted what was happening on the ground, especially on a cloudy day. We made a mistake, we admitted it, and apologized, the prime minister said.

Israel: Peres Sets Up 'Think Team' for Postelection Agenda

TA0705134996 Tel Aviv MA'ARIV in Hebrew 7 May 96 p 3

[Report by Ben Kaspit]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Prime Minister Shim'on Peres has set up a special team called "The 100-Day Team" whose task it is to work out operative plans, future government structures, and new ideas for the period immediately after the elections.

The team is headed by Minister Yosi Beilin and includes former Economics Ministry Director General Alon Li'el. Beilin yesterday confirmed the existence of the think team. "We are planning the structure of the future government and raising economic and social plans and ideas with the prime minister."

The team's mandate is not restricted, and its members deal with any issue they want. Among other things, they are discussing ways to speed up the political negotiations after the elections. [passage omitted]

Israel: Peres Interviewed on Peace Process, Iran, Labor Platform

TA0605202896 Jerusalem Israel Television Channel 1 Network in Hebrew 1745 GMT 6 May 96

[Interview with Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres in his office in Jerusalem by correspondents Dan Margalit, Yosef Lapid, Sheli Yehimovich, and Amnon Dankner in the studio on 6 May; from the Popolitika program — recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Margalit] Good evening to you, Mr. Prime Minister and Defense Minister, Shim'on Peres.

[Peres] Good evening.

[Margalit] Will you, too, set up a national unity government if you win the elections?

[Peres] I will enlist all those who are prepared to follow our basic guidelines. I once headed a national unity government in order to reach peace and security.

[Margalit] Will you prefer the Likud to others?

[Peres] I will prefer anybody who prefers the basic guidelines. The problem is not the composition, but rather the work plan of the government. Let met tell you; I learned this in 1984, and I am doing the same now: We are drawing up the 100-day program. We will come to the government prepared, with an orderly plan. Last time around we carried out everything we said. There was nothing we spoke of and did not do. I am currently working on this program, which we will start implementing the day after the elections.

[Yehimovich] We hear, Mr. Prime Minister, that Likud's leader, Binyamin Netanyahu, has accepted the Oslo accords, is more or less ready to follow this course, and is even considering the possibility of meeting with Yasir 'Arafat. He may then be your natural candidate for the establishment of a national unity government and a coalition, even before the religious factions.

[Peres] First, he has not accepted them in full. Second, I do not know who the master in Likud is. I heard quite a respected Likud member, Ari'el Sharon, say that he does not accept the Oslo accords.

[Yehimovich] Well, we do know who the Likud's chairman is!

[Peres] A chairman is a chairman, and a federation of forces is a federation of forces. Still, let me state with certainty that the Likud's plan of expanding settlements, of moving another 500,000 Jews to Judaea and Samaria, of investing $10 billion there, is the end of the peace process. It is not what one says but what one does that counts. What is said now is largely said for the sake of polls. This does not apply to all, but still, I am not impressed by such statements.

[Yehimovich] In other words, you do not intend to appeal to Binyamin Netanyahu for the establishment of a national unity government, do you?

[Peres] First, I hope we will receive a large enough majority, and I will be very glad if the Likud joins — why not — that is, if it joins according to the Oslo plan, not a deluxe Oslo, not a dissected Oslo, nor a miniature Oslo. How is it possible otherwise?

[Dankner] Mr. Peres, the Likud presents Labor as a party that favors a Palestinian state and has already decided to give up East Jerusalem. There are signs of these ideas in Labor indeed, such as the elimination of the clause in the platform that opposes the establishment of a Palestinian state. What do you have to say about this?

[Peres] Let me first say that the Likud should allow Labor to express its opinion. We do not need a spokesman in the form of Likud. Second, let me give you a serious answer here, Amnon. What usually happens with all platforms? A platform is written, but the opposite is done. The Likud wrote a platform whereby it would not give up the Sinai, but it did. The

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Likud did not write it would introduce an autonomy, but did, or rather committed itself to autonomy. Why is this? It is because every party negotiates with itself, and when it does so, it is wonderful; it can talk of the south, north, and west of the Dead Sea, of both banks of the Jordan River, and so on and so forth — why not? I say this is not real. If you want to make peace, you have to hold negotiations with the other side and need to reach an agreement on ideas with it. I then come and tell the public that I have several principles. The first principle is that Jerusalem remains the united capital of Israel. The second is that the Jordan River will remain the security border. A third, opposite principle: We do not want to rule over another nation. I say: Let me have the mandate to hold negotiations. I held negotiations; I know what this means. Negotiations are not a process of bargaining but rather a process of inventions, if you like, of innovations. Everything that is known is dead, and what is necessary should be produced.

[Lapid] Mr. Peres, you are battling over those two to three seats at the center of the political arena, the so-called floating votes, and you have therefore shifted a little to the right, in the security direction — you are providing security with peace [referring to Labor's election slogan] — while the Likud has moved to the left a little, in your direction — they are giving peace with security [referring to Likud's election slogan] — and then you come and complain that it is impossible to precisely understand the election campaign because there is not a great difference. Perhaps there is no real difference between you indeed!

[Peres] Look, if everything were verbosity, words could be changed or smoothed out. I am talking about content. Look, if the Likud — and I know the composition of the Likud government; it is Likud with Sharon, Refa'el Eytan, and Yesha' [Council of Jewish Settlements in Judaea, Samaria, and Gaza]. If the Likud, as I believe they will, moves half a million Jews to Judaea and Samaria, this means....

[Lapid, interrupting] They are not saying this.

[Peres] Why should they? Read though; they do say as much. They are fumbling on this issue. If they implement this, Israel will immediately turn into a binational state, peace will....

[Lapid, interrupting] You attribute to them something they are not claiming, and fault them for it. They do not say they will bring half a million people to Judaea and Samaria.

[Peres] Excuse me, you should decide whether you are a [Likud] spokesman or not. Yesha' said that they would bring half a million Jews. The Likud leader said he would expand the settlements. He does not yet know how many residents he will add, but he will surely do so. And you know, tell me how the scales are made, and I will tell you what weight they will produce.

[Margalit] Mr. Peres, how largely can you rely on the policy you are conducting? I am referring to two points here. First, if you are so confident of your way, why did you not abide by the clause that forces the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] to redeploy in Hebron by now? Second, perhaps you err in reading the map. Look, an orientalist like Prof. Yehoshu'a Porat is telling you: Sir, they are lying; they are taking you for a ride; they have not revised the Palestinian Charter.

[Peres] Orientalists, orientalists — I do not know the orientalists who foresaw the future. I do not know, for instance, that Prof. Porat knew that Oslo would take place, that he knew that the PLO would renounce terror. With all due respect....

[Dankner, interrupting] But he knows how to read a text perhaps.

[Peres] Well, am I disturbing him in the reading of texts? Look, the entire opposition to 'Arafat, including 'Abd-al-Haydar al-Shafi, says that what they did, the revision of the charter, is a scandal. If one wants to understand what is happening, rather than referring to such an orientalist, it is better to see what the opposition to 'Arafat is saying. He is being attacked incessantly. Why? If he has not revised the charter, why is he being attacked?

[Margalit] If both they and you, along with us, have so far regarded it as a historic change in the PLO's position, or an expression of a historic change that is already taking place, why have you not already begun redeploying the IDF in Hebron?

[Peres] I have, but in stages. I am defense minister, and I must differentiate between ink and blood. You can spill as much ink as you please; bloodletting must be avoided. It is my duty in every process and almost in every move to ask how casualties can be avoided.

[Lapid] And not to anger the religious sector before elections.

[Peres] I am in a dialogue with the Palestinians. I am not doing it without them. They know the situation. They know that if terrorism runs wild in Hebron, then Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] is strengthened, and they are also in deep trouble. So what is the tragedy? In implementing a process — and I say that I remain loyal to the process — I try to prevent bloodletting, I try to hold a dialogue, and I try to implement the process in a cool-headed and responsible manner, as best I can.

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[Yehimovich] We recall that just over a week ago Rabbi 'Ovadya Yosef — who heads a party that could be very important in forming a coalition, if you are elected — called on you personally in an extraordinary move to hold up the redeployment. Is that not caving in to the religious parties?

[Peres] No, I do not think so. If you are asking me that seriously, then the answer is no. I wrote 'Ovadya Yosef a letter in which I said I am committed to carrying out the Oslo accord and I will implement it, including Hebron. But I added in my letter, and I repeat it now, that there are three different areas in Hebron. We are speaking in generalities. There is the Cave of the Patriarchs — which is a holy site — which will remain the responsibility of the IDF and our responsibility. There is the Jewish settlement in Hebron, which has 450 people — that is all there is — which will remain our responsibility and be defended by the IDF. There are 160,000 Arab inhabitants, who will not remain our responsibility. I said that in my letter to Rabbi Yosef. I know that it is very easy to simplify things. I do not feel guilty or like a suspect. I feel like a responsible person, a defense minister who must weigh his decisions every moment. To my regret, in this election campaign, I find I have a different rival: the Iranians, the fundamentalists, the Islamic Jihad, and Hamas, who want to destroy the peace process.

[Dankner] Mr. Peres, you said clearly that the Islamic Jihad, Hamas, Iranians want to bring about an upheaval in the Israeli Government?

[Peres] Yes.

[Margalit] And Israel's destruction?

[Peres] Yes.

[Margalit] Its destruction?

[Peres] Yes. They first want to destroy the peace process. They believe that destroying the peace process we will bring about the disbanding of the Jewish state. We must understand that. They think that the fall of this government will lead to a halt of the peace process. Since the Nazis, the fundamentalist movement is the toughest movement I know of. It contains something of communism or totalitarianism, where the end justifies the means. I know with certainty that they hand down orders to lie, cheat, murder, to carry out terrorism. You know that we have those with whom to compare them. Our assessments are not different from those of the United States. It is not that they prefer the Likud. I did not say that. They prefer and try to bring us down....

[Yehimovich, interrupting] But it can be inferred from your remarks that the Iranians want Netanyahu as prime minister. It is not hard to arrive at that conclusion from your remarks.

[Peres] You will reach that conclusion if that is what you want. I did not say that.

[Lapid] Mr. Peres, Prime Minister Rabin's death was one of the moments that united the entire nation in grief and mourning. Do you not think that it was very cynical to initiate a ceremony that does not exist in the Jewish religion — a memorial service six months after his assassination and two weeks before the elections — to clearly exploit it for the benefit of your camp?

[Peres] First, Yitzhaq was murdered, but his heritage was not. I think the intention was to stress that even when the man is no longer alive, his path continues. I do not regard it as cynical. I believe it is good that young people congregate and good that they listen and sing. Yitzhaq found his death, but also....

[Lapid, interrupting] It is good that they vote Labor.

[Peres] Yitzhaq found his death, but discovered his generation. We do not disguise our identity. Are we wearing masks?

[Yehimovich] But do you not have an uncomfortable feeling about the fact that to a large extent, Labor's campaign depends on the personality of Yitzhaq Rabin, who to our regret, is no longer with us?

[Peres] Sheli, where did you see that? What campaign? We are not campaigning. As party leader, 99 percent of my time I deal with state issues. Where do you see campaigning?

[Yehimovich] We hear that Labor is making use of Yitzhaq Rabin's speeches in its campaign.

[Peres] Yes, that is correct. The man deserves it. He carried out a revolution and was assassinated for it.

[Yehimovich] Yes, but he is not running for prime minister.

[Peres] If you want to hear the answer, then I will tell you. In every speech I make I say that Yitzhaq Rabin started that enterprise. I believe I must give him credit. Of the four years that have passed since this government was elected, he was prime minister for three and a half of them. Yesterday, the Intel plant in Qiryat Gat was inaugurated, so should I not recall his name? Should I not recall the change in the order of priorities? What cynicism?

[Margalit] Mr. Peres, but if you speak about soul-searching, I would like to ask you about your government's soul-searching on the issue that Yitzhaq Rabin and you were the most striking leaders. A poll made

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public yesterday showed that Labor's peace policy is seriously harming the motivation of IDF recruits to combat units.

[Peres] What is the conclusion? To stop the peace process? I do not understand what that poll shows. I do not accept the view of that excellent officer, whom I know personally. Officers, just like civilians, have varying views.

[Yehimovich] The commander of the officers' school said peace might be mixing up the youths, who do not understand that we need a strong army even during peacetime. He said it is the task of the educators to explain it to the youths.

[Peres] It is better to be mixed up in peace than to be killed in war. Do not be mistaken about that.

[Yehimovich] I only quoted the officer.

[Lapid] You are making up slogans in the middle of this discussion.

[Peres] I do not make up slogans. I replied to a question.

[Dankner] Let us return to your denial about caving in to the religious. Earlier you referred to Rabbi Yosef and Hebron. I ask you about the amendment to Labor's platform in which religious freedoms and religious liberalism were wiped out. As a member of the left-wing, nonreligious community, why should I vote Labor when its skullcap is so tightly fixed?

[Peres] I do not wear any skullcap. The platform reflects reality. Labor's platform says there will not be religious or antireligious coercion. It says that the status quo will be maintained. What we are doing in practice is what we say in our platform. But to the point, you can vote for whomever you want, but in the final analysis, we must live together. I do not accept an antireligious position, just as I do not accept a negative stand against nonreligious people. I believe that alongside laws, we need manners, and culture, and to look for the middle path.

[Lapid] Mr. Peres, you also removed from your platform opposition to a Palestinian state....

[Peres, interrupting] I have already explained that to you.

[Lapid] This is the second part of that question, and for a month you have been silent about peace with Syria and withdrawing from the Golan because it does not suit you on the eve of the elections.

[Peres] We told the people: Give us a mandate to negotiate with the Palestinians on a permanent solution. One of the differences between us and the Likud is that it regards autonomy as the permanent solution. We think autonomy is a station along the way, and not the permanent solution. I myself have many ideas about how to totally resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but I will not make it public because the moment I do, it is dead, it loses its importance. I say: Give me a mandate to negotiate, except for those things I mentioned earlier, and we will reach something. Then, I will bring it to the people, who will decide. I do not think that we have to pile up all sorts of unfounded promises. I believe that people will be pleased if we conduct serious, responsible negotiations in order to prevent Israel from becoming a binational state, so that we do not control another people, so that we do not divide Jerusalem, and to ensure full security by maintaining strategic depth.

[Margalit] If you are reelected, what is the first thing you will do? In short, please.

[Peres] The first thing I will do is to renew the peace process with the Syrians as well — I am answering Yosef Lapid's question. I am not hiding anything. I say that in the coming four years I want to reach a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. I have my advantage....

[Margalit, interrupting] Syria before the Palestinians?

[Peres] It can be simultaneous. That is okay with me. There are reports about waiting in line, but why stand in line? We can do both together. I say from experience — and that is the main thing — that in the coming four years we can reach a comprehensive peace. We must have compromises, even on the Golan. I do not hide that. If that does not happen, then I see a race against the Iranian fundamentalists. If, God forbid, they obtain nuclear capabilities before we reach a comprehensive peace, that would be the greatest danger to the State of Israel. That is the reason I am very busy and operating from deep internal conviction.

[Margalit] How will peace with the Palestinians help us if Iran, with such a terrible regime, has an atomic bomb?

[Peres] Two things: First, we want to disband fundamentalism, which can be done by creating a peace situation and by improving economic conditions. These are the two instruments at our disposal. First, disbanding fundamentalism will isolate Iran and return it to its natural size. Two, if such a coalition is set up then economic pressure will be used against Iran, which is what I believe should be done. I do not think that we have to go to war. If Europe becomes convinced, as the Americans have, of that enormous danger, then Iran could be isolated. That is the plan. I am not only an optimist, but also very pessimistic. I know that we are in a terrible competition, and that we cannot fumble and cannot

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be afraid. The basis of the excellent friendship between Yitzhaq and I in recent years was that deep concern. We knew that we were two experienced people who had to make forthright decisions even if they were tough.

[Yehimovich] Mr. Peres, a semi-political and semi-personal question. It is said in your party that if you are elected prime minister it will be your last term and that that will be your strength in implementing all sorts of moves. I would like to ask you: If you are elected prime minister, will you swear here that it will be the last term in your political career?

[Peres] Sheli, why should I make such a commitment to you? I like you very much, but....

[Yehimovich, interrupting] You do not have to, but I can try.

[Peres] You try, but I want to be elected, and I will be elected for another term. I have a work plan, and God is great after that.

[Yehimovich] In other words, you have plans for the term after that? You do not reject that possibility?

[Lapid] Compared to [former German Chancellor] Adenauer, he is a young man.

[Peres] As de Gaulle once said: I promise not to forget to die. It happens to all of us; do not worry. But in the coming four years, I will be okay.

[Dankner] It was reported in the press that the Likud plans to use in its campaign something allegedly said by you following one of the recent terrorist attacks. You allegedly said: I am cursed. Did you ever feel or say something like that?

[Peres] No, I read it in the papers. I am a happy person. I read quotes of things I never uttered. Some generosity is called for.

[Lapid] But good quotes?

[Peres] Not always. For instance, that is not a good one. It is a question of luck.

[Lapid] Mr. Peres, what do you think the State of Israel will be like in the year 2000?

[Peres] If I am to answer you honestly, I think it can be a tremendous state. What has transpired is that today the sources of might and wealth are not materialistic or territorial, or not even quantitative. Everything today derives from the level of science and technology.

[Lapid] That is your vision of the Middle East?

[Peres] Yes, that Middle East is coming about. All my major endeavors in life met up with a great deal of skepticism and cynicism. What can I do? I am not impressed by whatever people have to say. I believe in it. I have nerves of steel, and I have no intention of changing anything in what I believe is vital and possible. Israel can be a model state. I was a student of Ben-Gurion and I saw all those who laughed when he said: Light unto the nations and the chosen people. I believe in that. The Jewish people always had more intelligence than geography. We have not changed.

[Margalit] Mr. Peres, I understand that you plan to win the elections on 29 May. You might win, the polls predict it, and perhaps you will not. I invite you to Popolitika on 30 May whatever happens. Thank you.

[Peres] Thank you.

Israel: MK Darawshah—Yasin Likely To Be Released Before Elections

TA0705112496 Jerusalem Channel 2 Television Network in Hebrew 1700 GMT 6 May 96

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Translated Text] Knesset Member 'Abd-al-Wahhab Darawshah of the Arab Democratic Party [ADP] received the impression from his meeting with Minister Yosi Beilin that Shaykh Ahmad Yasin would be released before the elections. Beilin refused to confirm the claim, saying that the issue would be discussed in another series of meetings.

Yasin's release is one of the conditions presented by the leaders of the Arab parties for supporting Shim'on Peres as prime minister. Other demands are the release of security prisoners, lifting the closure on the territories, and a total IDF [Israel Defense Forces] withdrawal from Hebron.

Our correspondent Yehuda Litani reports that as part of Labor's courting of the Arab vote, Prime Minister Peres will meet with ADP members next week.

Israel: Source—Hebron Redeployment 'Immediately' After Elections

TA0605175896 Jerusalem Channel 2 Television Network in Hebrew 1700 GMT 6 May 96

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The government will effect the redeployment in Hebron immediately after the elections, regardless of their results and without waiting for the establishment of the next government. This was made clear by a Jerusalem political source to our political correspondent 'Imanu'el Rosen. Hebron was one of the main issues in the deliberations over the permanent settlement between Israel and the Palestinians in Taba. [passage omitted]

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Israel: 7 Wounded by IDF Fire in Qalqilyah Demonstration

TA0605161096 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1500 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] In disturbances in Qalqilyah at noon seven Arab inhabitants were wounded by IDF [Israel Defense Forces] gunfire. Soldiers fired live ammunition and rubber bullets at the rioters. Our correspondent Yoni Ben-Menahem reports that tempers flared following the confiscation of land to set up the fence separating Qalqilyah from Israel.

Three people were [also] killed in a candy store in Ramallah, probably from a gas leak.

[Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew at 1505 GMT on 6 May adds: "The IDF declared Qalqilyah a closed military area following the riots in which seven Arabs were wounded."]

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Jordan: Amman Reacts to al-Asad-Saddam Border Meeting

JN0605122296 Amman AL-BILAD in Arabic 8 May 96 p 1

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] A thaw in Iraqi-Syrian relations took place recently after a meeting between Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad and Iraqi President Saddam Husayn in a tent on the borders on the banks of the Euphrates River.

The meeting between the two presidents in the tent that was built in the Syrian-Iraqi-Turkish border triangle lasted 90 minutes. [passage omitted]

Jordan was not pleased with the reports on the summit through which Damascus seeks to play a major role in Iraq which can only be at the expense of Jordan's role.

A Jordanian source told AL-BILAD that Jordan will not allow Syria to minimize its regional role under any circumstances, and regardless of whether Syria signs a peace treaty with Israel or normalizes relations with Iraq.

The source added that Syria seeks to play a role in Baghdad similar to the one it played in Beirut. This would enable it to shuffle the cards they way it wants as it did in Beirut after forcing Israel and the United States to deal with its presence in Lebanon as a fait accompli.

The source said that the Syrian leaders now view the Baghdad arena as one of their strategic priorities after having secured their role in Lebanon.

For its part, Jordan remains alert to the new warmth in Iraqi- Syrian relations and tries to counter it. The Jordanian Government issued directives to the media not to attack Iraq and to suspend all statements against Baghdad in exchange for a similar stand by Iraq. A statement by the presidency in Baghdad said that Iraq's commitment to supplying Jordan with oil has not changed and is irrevocable.

As a gesture of good will, the Jordanian security agencies returned seven Iraqi military who had crossed into Jordan and who were detained for one week. The security agencies did not hand them over to the Iraqi forces but released them at the borders at their request, and because they feared for their lives.

Jordan: Report on 'Silent Crisis' With Yemen

JN0605115896 Amman AL-MAJD in Arabic 6 May 96 p 1

[Unattributed report]

[FBIS Translated Text] Sanaa — AL-MAJD learned that a silent crisis flared recently between Jordan and Yemen and that the political relations between the two countries, which have always been strong and stable, had witnessed a marked decline.

Yemeni sources close to President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih said that the usual contacts between the president and Jordanian officials had almost come to a halt since the signing of the Wadi al-'Arabah accord and Jordan's thrust toward swift normalization with Israel. The sources told the correspondents of the Yemeni AL-WUHDAWI newspaper and the Jordanian AL-MAJD newspaper — both speaking for the Nasirist stream in the two countries — that the Yemeni president criticized the Jordanian officials' drive toward Israel and alienation from Arab countries, particularly Syria and Iraq.

The sources pointed out that President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih asked a Jordanian businessmen delegation that visited Sanaa recently about the covert causes that prompted the Jordanian leadership to adopt such a position toward Israel — which underwent a sudden shift, and which President Salih had not aware of throughout the past years of distinguished relations with Jordan.

The sources, which are close to the Yemeni republican palace, concluded by saying that the Yemeni leadership, which has always been pleased with the Jordanian interest in Yemeni issues, viewed as lukewarm the official Jordanian stand on the Eritrean aggression against al-Hanish al-Kabir island — an aggression which everybody knows is supported by Israel and planned in Washington with the aim of containing Yemen and tightening the noose on the Arab world.

Jordan: Amman Allows Iraqi Opposition To Publish Newspaper

NC0405151596 (Clandestine) Voice of Iraqi People in Arabic 1400 GMT 4 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Jordanian Government has agreed to allow the Iraqi opposition to publish a newspaper belonging to one of its movements in Amman under the name of 'IRAQ AL-MUSTAQBAL [Iraq of the Future]. Press reports in Amman today say that the Jordanian Government recently received requests from various Iraqi opposition organizations abroad to open representative bureaus in Amman to carry out the activities of the Iraqi opposition, whose goal is to topple Saddam Husayn and rescue the Iraqi people.

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Lebanon: Nasrallah on Understanding, Resistance Right

NC0705071096 Beirut AL-SAFIR in Arabic 30 Apr 96 pp 3-4

[Interview with Hizballah Secretary General Hasan Nasrallah by correspondent Joseph Samahah; place and date not given]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [Samahah] Some say that this confrontation was the result of the confluence of two currents desiring to escalate the situation. On one side was the U.S.- Israeli desire to translate the Sharm al-Shaykh decisions into action, lay down a nucleus for regional security, benefit from the military agreement with Turkey, etc. On the other side was the desire of "Hizballah," Syria, and Iran to test the alliance established at Sharm al-Shaykh, break their isolation, and bring down Shim'on Peres. What do you think are the motives for what happened?

[Nasrallah] Regarding the first part, that is the U.S.-Israeli desires, this goes without saying, especially in the wake of Sharm al-Shaykh. That summit was basically held to provide international and Arab cover for an attack on the resistance movements in the region, which they call terrorist movements. We all know what prevented Syria and Lebanon from going to that summit. They did not want to help legitimize any aggression against the region or the resistance movements here. After obtaining this cover up from the Sharm al-Shaykh summit, the large-scale Israeli operation against the resistance movements in the region began. Practically speaking, the groups carrying out jihad now are far ahead. This, however, does not mean that we ignore the other groups. But the prominent groups — if I can put it that way — are "Hamas" [Islamic Resistance Movement] and the "al-Jihad" in Palestine," and "Hizballah" in Lebanon.

With the cooperation of Yasir 'Arafat, chairman of the self-rule authority, the Israeli enemy dealt hard blows — we do not say fatal ones — to "Hamas" and "Islamic Jihad" in Palestine. What remained for them to do was to hit the resistance in Lebanon. That was a U.S.-Israeli decision that was given some sort of the cover and support which they had sought at Sharm al-Shaykh. This operation had to be executed before the parliamentary elections in the Israeli entity so as to exploit it electorally, because [Israeli Prime Minister] Shim'on Peres needed to prove that he was a man of war, peace, and security.

I wanted to say that the motivation for this war was U.S.-Israeli in nature. On the other hand, neither the resistance in Lebanon, nor Syria or Iran had any desire to go into this war. The war we desire is the guerrilla war that the "Islamic Resistance" is waging inside the occupied strip. In our view, this war is more useful, more effective, and has more influence on the enemy, his moves, and his morale than the "bombardment" war or the (loathsome) war he recently waged.

What we desire is this type of fighting that exhausts and pressures our enemy and therefore forces him to leave our territories. Hence, it is not true to say that the resistance, Syria, or any other party that is involved in what is happening in Lebanon had any desire to provoke this type of war or this type of escalation.

[Samahah] What were Israel's objectives when it went into this war?

[Nasrallah] Really, the objectives have become known. None of us can add anything new.

The main thrust was basically to target the military infrastructure of the resistance in order to isolate it popularly and politically and eliminate it completely. That is what they basically agreed on at Sharm al-Shaykh. The enemy later said that these were not the objectives. But it was a repetition of the operation they called "Accountability." At that time, they began with very major objectives and ended with the "July [1993] understanding." We believe that this was the main objective of the operation. That is what was declared in the first few days. By striking at the resistance the way they did, they were ultimately aiming to damage the infrastructure, paralyze the resistance in the south and the western al-Biqa', stop the firing of Katyushas in response to Israeli aggression, create popular resentment against what was happening and hence make the people turn against the resistance and hold it responsible for what was happening. The purpose was to put "pressure" on the Lebanese Government position through aggression, especially as this position has its own rationale which is sometimes different [from that of the resistance]. The pressure on the official and popular stands and the blows to the military infrastructure of the resistance were supposed to help end the resistance movement or reach a stage where the Lebanese would capitulate to the Israelis.

Politically, the achievement of that direct objective would have isolated Lebanon, forced it to capitulate, and forced a separate Lebanese peace with them. This would have completed the encirclement of Syria and hence Peres and the Americans could have reached the settlement they want: If Syria wants to join, then it is welcome, but only on Israel's conditions. If not, it would then be fated to live isolated in this region. [passage omitted]

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[Samahah] Can this war be divided, politically and militarily, into stages?

[Nasrallah] The proceedings could be divided into two stages: Before the massacres and after the massacres. As for the military performance, we did not see anything indicating stages in the Israeli military activity.

[Samahah] We have reached an agreement, at last. Could you give us an assessment, from the resistance point of view, of the gains and losses? And what restrictions does this agreement impose on resistance activity?

[Nasrallah] We could say primarily that this understanding means that most of the goals of the Israeli operation—to be on the safe side, I will not say all of them—evaporated the moment the Israelis accepted this agreement. The attempt to strike at Hizballah has failed, their hope of militarily ending the resistance has collapsed, their aim of driving a wedge between Lebanon and Syria and taking Lebanon from the war directly to the negotiating table is finished, isolating Syria is finished, and even their portrayal of the resistance in Lebanon as terrorism has collapsed. The whole world has started to acknowledge the fact that the fighting in Lebanon is between Israel and the resistance men defending their land. Thus, when we read the understanding we definitely recognize that all these issues are finished.

If you notice, in all their remarks in the past two days Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq, Chief of Staff Amnon Shahaq, and Peres denied that Israel's objective had been to disarm and strike Hizballah and to impose a separate peace deal on Lebanon. However, the press conferences during the first two days of the operation are available and can be looked at. Naturally each party will attempt to read the understanding from its own perspective to show that it accomplished something or scored a victory. Sometimes, if one party wishes to avoid the main rules of the understanding it can claim the existence of secret clauses that permit what is not permissible in the understanding. Here is the text of the understanding, and naturally the English text is the official version. And this is the official Arabic translation. I would like to say at the start that we were a party to drafting the substance of this understanding but we had nothing to do with the text. Thus, this understanding is considered to be between the Lebanese Government and the government of the Israeli entity, according to what we have here. [passage omitted]

There is nothing (in the text of the understanding) that prevents fighting or resistance in order to liberate the land. Thus, the resistance's freedom to act to liberate the land is secure and is not at issue. As for the protection of the civilians, which is another of our goals, we notice that before the July understanding nobody cared about the Lebanese civilians—neither the United States nor France, Russia, the EU, the Arab League, or the UN. Nobody was concerned about it, to the extent that sometimes we did not hear any condemnation of the killing of civilians in the south. The resistance used Katyushas to put pressure on the Israelis and tell them that if Lebanese civilians are placed in danger, your civilians will be in danger too. You could say that the rocket and fire power is not balanced, which is true, but the mere existence of a threat, forcing Israeli civilians into shelters, wounding some of them, and obstructing work in their factories constitute an element of pressure. [passage omitted]

The July understanding established the situation where no one in the world could speak of Israeli civilians and ignore the Lebanese civilians. This is because we would not have accepted at any price any arrangement that provided security for the Israeli civilians in northern Palestine and ignored Lebanese civilians. And this understanding now says that both sides wish to spare the civilians. We agree to this, because we do not attack civilians in the first place. The understanding suits our purpose in this regard. However, we asked for guarantees. We said before that Israel had violated the understanding, and vice versa. Nobody guaranteed the [July 1993] understanding and everybody said that they were not party to it. Even Syria said that. Today, however, there is a committee of guarantors and a monitoring group. There is the United States, which is the same as Israel. This means that there are two Israels in addition to France, Syria, and Lebanon. This group is now responsible for handling any violations. For our part, we say that we are not interested in violating this understanding. We believe that by managing to protect our civilians we have scored a victory and done something unique in Lebanon for the past 10 years.

Thus, protection for civilians has been insured no matter what happens on the military level. This means that if a suicide mujahid blows himself up against an Israeli military convoy, killing and wounding scores, the Israelis have no right to react against civilians in Lebanon. This is a very important achievement. Thus, we are eager not to violate this understanding. We are not fascinated or obsessed with firing Katyushas, and it does not worry us. Accordingly, we could say that this understanding represents a new and serious attempt to protect Lebanese civilians; and we are eager to keep it and we accept its substance. As for the resistance's activity, it will not be affected.

[Samahah] For the sake of comparison with the July understanding, we notice that in this [April 1996] un-

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derstanding there will be a bigger role for the Lebanese state, which will be represented on the monitoring team. Does this not require a new, different, and perhaps advanced formula for the relationship between Hizballah and the state's machinery, such as the government, the army, and the internal security forces? Does this not require a new relationship between Hizballah and the state?

[Nasrallah] We stress that there is a national need for cooperation between Hizballah and the Lebanese state's various institutions. There was a need for such cooperation even before this understanding was reached. In other words, it is not this understanding which has dictated this need. For years, especially after the parliamentary elections and our entry into parliament, our hand has always been extended for this cooperation. It is true that we are in the opposition because we have our own views on certain policies that are being pursued in several sectors. But we have always stated—and this is not something new—that we are not a substitute for the state. We do not present ourselves as a substitute for the state, either on the political level or the social and economic levels. We are one movement inside this country, just like all the movements, parties, and forces engaged in political, social, cultural, intellectual, economic, and humanitarian activities. We may be different because we are still carrying out resistance activity. Perhaps there are other forces active in the resistance, but for one reason or another right now Hizballah constitutes the main force that is carrying out resistance activity. There is no problem with the principle of cooperation, coordination, and openness with the state. We have not been remiss in this. There are other calculations for the state and its institutions. We do not want to engage in recriminations over this subject.

Talking specifically about the resistance, we are a bit sensitive. In my opinion, the argument that the resistance must be subject to the political authority is not in the interest of the authorities. That is because so far if a bomb is placed, explodes, and kills Israelis, the United States and Israel hold Hizballah responsible. Tomorrow, they will hold the government and the Lebanese Army responsible.

We have noticed that the Israeli enemy avoided attacking the army during the war even though the Army took an excellent stand and contributed to the defense of the country. The Israeli army cannot hold the Lebanese Army and state responsible for the resistance operations. The Lebanese state is "smart" to disown us and say that Hizballah does not listen to it. This eases the pressure on the political authorities. That is one point. Secondly, the resistance is required when it is effective in such a way that it can exhaust the enemy, put pressure on Israel to withdraw, and even strengthen [Lebanon's] bargaining position in the negotiations. Although in principle we are opposed to the negotiations, we have always said that we are not "angry" or sad if at the negotiating table Lebanon or Syria take advantage of the pressure the resistance exerts on Israel.

Therefore, what is needed is an effective resistance. In order to be effective, it must be carried out on a daily basis. If we subordinate the resistance to the political authority, what will happen? "Today, boys, do not carry out any operations. I do not know what is going on." "Tomorrow, boys, the regional situation is not suitable." It would not remain an effective resistance. In my opinion, if the resistance becomes subordinate to the political authority, there will be no resistance because in that case it would be for show and propaganda and not be serious or effective.

We declare that henceforth the supreme national interest dictates that the resistance should be effective and free. There are limits to which the resistance has adhered for years. We do need someone to dictate rules to us. The people are our people, the demolished houses are our houses, and the displaced people are our people. Therefore, we are eager for the blood of our youth to bring results. For example, we do not carry out martyrdom operations haphazardly. We have hundreds of martyrdom-seeking youth. I personally come under daily pressure from youngsters who want to carry out martyrdom operations. In that case, I might tell one of them: Take this bomb to the border strip and if you meet two of Lahd's group [South Lebanese Army] or an Israeli, detonate the bomb. We do not carry out such martyrdom operations. If the operation is not effective and productive and if it does not drain the enemy, we have no legal, religious, moral, or other right to strap a bomb on "our brother" and tell him to go and die as he wishes.

When we carry out a jihad and seek martyrdom, we do it to achieve victory. We are champions of victory. We are champions of martyrdom to achieve victory and glory for our people and nation. Therefore, there are limits to which the resistance adheres. National interest dictates that the resistance remain. I believe we have settled and closed this subject in the past two days.

[Samahah] In light of the relationship with the state that you spoke about and in view of the rules that the resistance has bound itself by and which were explained in the understanding, do you believe that it is possible to formulate a joint policy and coordinate the policies of the resistance and the state on the border strip and the inhabitants there?

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[Nasrallah] I have a proposal. Why does the state not form a resistance group? Many countries have been occupied, but it was not their armies which fought. Maybe there were certain conditions for this. But they used to form a certain popular force that they financed, sponsored, and managed. Let the state form a resistance group within a popular framework and not an official one. Let it finance and manage it and therefore it can control its performance. As for us, let us see. If we like this type of resistance and if that is what they mean when they talk about harmony, then there is no problem. We might tell them: Come and adopt us. Give us weapons and funds and political cover. Our main preoccupation is to have real resistance, not to either be in the state's hands or out of them.

[Samahah] I have another proposal. From what we recently saw in Lebanon in general and judging by the military resistance, the emergence of the minimum level of internal cohesiveness, the mobilization to extend relief, etc., is it possible to open doors other than the armed resistance to attract the inhabitants of the border strip to some forms of resistance less than armed action? In this way, the state's role would not be to form an armed group but to inspire the inhabitants of the strip to confront Israel as a prelude to returning to the homeland's embrace.

[Nasrallah] We have proposed more than that. We have proposed that there be no conditions for the return of the inhabitants of the occupied strip. We called on the state to shoulder its responsibility toward this strip and the people there so that if some people have gone far away seeking normality we can then return them to the homeland even if it is under occupation. The state is responsible for the people in the strip.

If our party's humanitarian establishments could act inside the occupied strip, then we would mobilize all the resources and take them there. But you know that the military mujahid of "Hizballah" is not only banned from the strip, but the people there are also banned from talking or thinking; these things lead to detention and imprisonment in al-Khiyam prison.

There are the state and its establishments. We have always called on it to give priority to the occupied strip so that the people can stand fast and no one would have to go to work for the Jews or with the Israeli civil administration. This is the state's responsibility.

[Samahah] Regarding the monitoring group, there is some ambiguity about its composition, its level, whether it will be military in nature, when it will meet, if it will have observers or not. Do you know anything about the group's formation? There is a U.S.-Israeli side within it and a Syrian-Lebanese one? Might France play the role of referee? Are you involved in the mechanics of this group's work?

[Nasrallah] It appears that the talks on this understanding did not have enough time to enter into the details. I believe that there is some ambiguity, even about the group's members. Therefore, they just said that the monitoring group will meet and draw up a mechanism for its work. I do not believe that there is a mechanism so far for this work. I believe that there will be several viewpoints about it.

[Samahah] Do you think there is a clear link between the understanding and the resumption of the negotiations?

[Nasrallah] The understanding will not necessarily lead to resumption of the negotiations, though the Americans hope this will happen. The Americans hope that the bilateral negotiations will resume. But I believe that the Israeli calculations now are somewhat complicated, especially as it was the Israelis who suspended the negotiations, not the Syrians or Lebanese. (Israeli Prime Minister) Shim'on Peres now has his election battle and wants to take care of it. If a return to the negotiations will help his elections battle, then I believe that the Americans and Israelis will seek to get the negotiators back to the table before the Israeli elections.

[Samahah] Has the party assessed the official and popular reaction on the Arab and Islamic levels? If your answer is yes, what is the assessment and what could be done on the popular level to establish ties with Islamic or non-Islamic forces that voiced their solidarity? Is there any concept on this?

[Nasrallah] During the war we made general assessments. I cannot say we had the opportunity to sit down and assess things calmly. Now that the war is over we have a huge duty to perform, namely, to support the returnees, dress the wounds, and contribute to reconstruction.

As for the general assessment, we believe the official and popular reactions were good, in some cases excellent. If we discuss official reaction we can say that the official Lebanese stance was good, as was the stance of the Arab foreign ministers who condemned Israel and issued such a statement. Frankly speaking, this was not expected. This is a good omen. We heard of many good stances worldwide. Take the UN General Assembly. It condemned Israel despite U.S. efforts to prevent the condemnation and have both the killer and victim condemned. So this is a good sign. Generally, official reaction was good and unbiased, much better than the reaction during the July [1993] war.

[Samahah] Was it better than what was inspired by the Sharm al- Shaykh [summit]?

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[Nasrallah] Certainly. We believe the most important results of this battle, which we did not start, were that it rendered the Sharm al-Shaykh summit null and void. The summit no longer has any life or spirit.

On the official level, efforts were made to isolate Syria and Lebanon because they boycotted Sharm al-Shaykh. But some foreign ministers met in Damascus and on the Damascus-Beirut road and prominent heads of state contacted President al-Asad. All this has proven that the war cannot determine the fate of this region, something that cannot be determined without Syria and Lebanon. Even if they hold 100 summits like Sharm al-Shaykh they will not determine the fate of this region without our participation.

Lebanese popular reaction was excellent. If we say today that we have a people with a strong will, a resisting people, and a great people, it would not be out of courtesy; it would be a fact. Some address the people to incite them. What we are trying to do today is not to incite the Lebanese people, but to help them see things as they are.

We received information that many sectors of the Arab people showed great understanding. Even those who did not demonstrate have shown this level of understanding. There are Arab regimes that do not let their people demonstrate.

The same thing prevailed in the Islamic world. The media and foreigners played a role in communicating a living picture of events in Lebanon.

We all saw huge spontaneous demonstrations expressing a good position in Turkey following a pact with Israel. The same thing happened in Egypt, which achieved reconciliation and normalization with Israel long ago. I believe popular reaction in Lebanon and elsewhere prompted Israel and the United States to halt the operation, which greatly harmed Shim'on Peres, the Labor Party, the settlement plan, and the U.S. plan in the region. They all deduced that continuing military action would harm the U.S.-Israeli strategic plan in the region. Without this popular and official reaction, the United States and Israel would not have been so anxious to end the problem quickly.

[Samahah] One of the confirmed results of the confrontation is that the Sharm al-Shaykh project has been dealt a major blow and it is difficult for it to continue as it started. Then there is France, which has become involved in the settlement, breaking the 10-year U.S. monopoly in organizing the situation in the region. Is this presence circumstantial or will it have a position in future settlement issues? There is another invisible result—Peres' idea for the new Middle East has received a severe blow and he is now forced to retreat from his huge ambitions. The first question pertains to your evaluation of the French presence and its ability to continue and whether there is a decision to pave the way for its continuation. Will there be stances that allow it to be an effective party? Without local support it will be unable to play any role. The second question is: What is the fate of the Middle Eastern project, which was stumbling economically and in its security aspects, as Sharm al-Shaykh showed?

[Nasrallah] As long as contacts have gone on between Damascus and Beirut, we have been among the sides maintaining that the more sponsor countries there are the better. Is it in the interest of Lebanon, Syria, and the people in the region to break the American monopoly?

We could delve into discussions regarding the history of the other countries involved. But breaking the U.S. monopoly is in our interest, never mind how balanced the countries that have become involved in the region are and how much they will consider Lebanese and Arab interests. We proceeded from this concept to demand a French presence, and a possible European Union [EU] attendance. Failing the latter, we asked for a representative of the EU to be present. We even asked that Russia be a member of the committee. The more guarantor countries the more likely the Lebanese people's interests will be realized.

If we ignore the British remarks, the EU and Russia stressed the need for the French presence. I believe this decided France's membership of the committee. Russia was excluded.

We believe France must realize that what enables it to practice its role is being unbiased. If France takes the side of Syria, Lebanon, and the Arab countries this will enable it to play a big role. But if it has a balanced approach it can preserve its role in the region. The Israelis do not want the French role. Israel insulted the French foreign minister. But the French foreign minister's persistence enabled him to continue his diplomatic activities in the region. Those who could give the French role a position or niche in regional activities are Lebanon, Syria, and the Arab countries. I expect France knows this. Based on this knowledge we can expect a kind of balanced role or stance from France.

At the very least the absence of a U.S. monopoly could decrease the pressure and ease the siege Israel is imposing on the region.

[Samahah] What about the negotiations?

[Nasrallah] Of course this understanding does not necessarily lead to specific results in the negotiations. France

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has taken some steps. This does not mean it can take further steps. The United States wants to go on clinging strongly to the negotiations. It will allow no other party to enter the course of the peace process negotiations. It has distanced Russia, the other sponsor it recognizes officially. So I do not believe it will let France or any other superpower get involved in the negotiations.

I said this process has caused grave political, cultural, psychological, and security damage to the "new Middle East" project. Therefore Shim'on Peres needs a long time, much longer than he thinks, to realize this dream.

I am not claiming that the project has been destroyed but grave damage has been done to it.

[Samahah] What is Hizballah's definition of the Syrian and Iranian role in the war that took place?

[Nasrallah] True, the Lebanese Government was a partner in the negotiations. But they and we know that the real, strong, negotiator — the one who managed things with his nerves of steel, courage, expertise, and precision, and through his expansive supervision of what is happening in the region and understanding of the gains and losses — is President al-Asad. Proof of this is the result he achieved through the agreement. The major role in these negotiations went to President al-Asad, who was a direct negotiator. We know that President al-Asad always supports Lebanon and adopts the resistance. He is not a mediator, but a party involved in the conflict.

The Syrian role largely helped Lebanon confront this aggression and its results, through contacts with the Arab countries and the use of friendships outside and inside the Arab League. We could say Syria employed all its political and diplomatic influences, as well as all its experiences to support Lebanese diplomatic and political moves. In this, we are not denying the positive role of Lebanese diplomacy.

Iran also used all its influence and used its relations with the Europeans, Russians, and other countries so that it could have an effect on this level.

This is on the political level. Iran and Syria gave Lebanon moral support. This makes Lebanon feel that it is not alone and isolated. There is another party that speaks the same way as it does and behaves in accordance with its logic. [passage omitted]

Lebanon: Buwayz, Italy's Agnelli Comment on Talks

NC0605123796 Beirut Voice of Lebanon in Arabic 1115 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Following her talks with Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz at the Foreign Ministry, Italian Foreign Minister Susanna Agnelli and the European Union [EU] delegation went to B'abda Palace where an expanded meeting was held. It was attended by President Ilyas al-Hirawi, Chamber of Deputies Speaker Nabih Birri, Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri, Minister Buwayz, and Ambassador Zafir al-Hasan on the Lebanese side and the Spanish and Irish secretaries of state and the Spanish, Italian, and Irish ambassadors on the European side.

The meeting lasted one hour but Agnelli made no statement after it ended. The meeting was preceded by one held by the president, the speaker, and the prime minister during which they assessed the outcome of contacts. Agnelli also met for some time with Prime Minister al-Hariri and discussed his upcoming visit to Italy.

Following her talks at the Foreign Ministry, Agnelli referred to differences over the proposed ideas and said that peace is not imminent.

Here is a report from correspondent Jinan Kharrat from the Foreign Ministry:

[Begin recording] [Kharrat] The U.S. and French proposals to form the monitoring group and draw up its mechanism and the overall developments in the peace process were the focus of talks between the Lebanese and the EU delegations. Following the meeting, Minister Buwayz said that the talks dealt with the peace process, the April understanding, and the means of forming a mechanism to implement it. He called for an effective European role in the region. Minister Buwayz had this to say:

[Buwayz] We first discussed the situation concerning the peace process and particularly the outcome of the recent Israeli aggressions. We discussed the understanding reached and the means of forming the mechanism to implement this understanding. We briefed Minister Agnelli and her accompanying delegation on the contents of the U.S. and French proposals. We heard about the European view from her, especially on economic issues and other areas for cooperation.

[Kharrat] Minister Agnelli said she was briefed by Minister Buwayz on the contents of the U.S. and French initiatives, adding that Minister Buwayz is preparing to go to Damascus to discuss them. She expressed Europe's willingness to play a role in the peace process, which we want to be lasting and not restricted to a cease-fire. She noted that the EU has asked Israel thousands of times to implement Resolution 425.

In response to the U.S. Administration's claim that the monitoring group will replace the peace process, Agnelli said: If they can reach a lasting peace, then

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this is a good idea. But in light of the current situation, they cannot achieve this soon. She stressed that there are no differences over forming the monitoring group but added that there is no full agreement so far on the contents of the papers. She underlined the need to coordinate between the EU and the United States on the roles to be played in the region. She noted that the Americans succeeded in achieving a cease-fire and are seeking to maintain this situation in the future and the EU should not interfere unless asked to do so. [end recording]

Lebanon: Iranian, Hizballah Leaders Reportedly Hold 'Secret' Meeting

JN0605142096 Amman AL-BILAD in Arabic 8 May 96 p 1

[FBIS Translated Text] Israel recently faced new challenges from Hizballah following information from Tehran about a secret meeting between Iranian Revolutionary Guard Commander Mohsen Reza'i and Hizballah leaders in Beirut.

According to the information received by AL-BILAD, the meeting resulted in entrusting Hizballah with the task of putting all the Islamic organizations and the Palestinian factions that oppose the peace process and support Iran under a unified command led by Hizballah.

During the meeting, the conferees discussed the issue of moving the 4,000 mujahidin from Bosnia to southern Lebanon. The mujahidin will be distributed to Hizballah camps and centers in southern Lebanon, al-Biqa', and the southern suburb in Beirut. The conferees also discussed the possibility of sending some of them to Israel to carry out suicide operations there if the situation requires it and the possibility of training others to carry out operations against sensitive foreign targets in some Arab and Western states.

Security sources said that all signs indicate that the mujahidin will be transported in groups by boat. However, the information did not say whether the transportation process will take place soon.

Lebanon: Hizballah Denies Secret Annex to US-Brokered Truce

NC0605185596 Paris AFP in English 1754 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Beirut, May 6 (AFP) — Hizballah denied Monday [6 May] Israeli reports of a secret annex to the US-brokered ceasefire that put an end to the Jewish state's 16-day war against the Iranian-backed guerrillas last month.

Hizballah MP Sayyid Ibrahim al-Amin told reporters: "There is no secret annex and if there were any they are the fabrication of the politics of America which seeks to cover up the enemy's defeat."

Earlier the Israeli government released the text of a letter from US Secretary of State Warren Christopher to Prime Minister Shim'on Peres acknowledging Israel's right to respond to Hizballah attacks on its occupation troops inside Lebanon.

It said the letter was written as an unpublished annex to the April 26 ceasefire agreement, which went into effect the next day ending Israel's Operation Grapes of Wrath aimed at stopping Hizballah Katyusha attacks on its territory.

Under the term of a truce brokered by Christopher, and described as an "understanding" between Israel, Lebanon and Hizballah, the Jewish state and the guerrillas are barred from attacking civilians on both sides of the border.

The accord makes no mention of Israel's right to defend its forces in south Lebanon, since neither Lebanon, Syria nor Hizballah would have agreed to a text that could be seen as legitimizing the Israeli occupation.

But al-Amin said: "The understanding stated in unequivocal terms and confirmed Lebanon's right to resist against Zionist occupation."

"This understanding created a kind of guarantee to prevent civilians from coming under attack and in exchange it gave the Resistance (Hizballah) the right to confront the occupation forces," he added.

Al-Amin, speaking at the end of a meeting between President Ilyas al-Hirawi and Hizballah MPs, stressed that "neither can America or anyone else stop the Lebanese from resisting."

Lebanon: Anonymous Officials Reject U.S. Monitoring Group Blueprint

TA0705060796 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English 1400 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Officials in Beirut say Lebanon and Syria have rejected an American blueprint for a five-nation monitoring group to oversee the cease fire in Lebanon.

The government officials in the Lebanese capital spoke on condition of anonymity. They said the joint decision against the American proposal was reached in the weekend summit between Presidents Hafiz al-Asad of Syria and Ilyas al-Hirawi of Lebanon.

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Lebanon: Al-Hariri—Joint Paper With Syria on Committee Drafted

NC0705091196 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 0800 GMT 7 May 96

[Report by Ahmad 'Izz-al-Din, NATIONAL NEWS AGENCY correspondent at the B'abda Palace]

[FBIS Translated Text] Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri has revealed that the meetings in Damascus [between Lebanese and Syrian officials on 6 May] resulted in a joint working paper that will be submitted to the American and French ambassadors. He noted different viewpoints regarding the formation of the security committee. But he said that through discussion a paper accepted by all the sides can be drafted. Al-Hariri was speaking after a meeting with President Ilyas al-Hirawi. He said:

[Begin recording] [Al-Hariri] We met the Syrian brothers yesterday and we agreed on a joint paper that will be submitted to the U.S. and French ambassadors here. Press reports of problems [regarding the formation of a monitoring committee to supervise the cease-fire agreement] are not very accurate. The Americans, the French, and ourselves [the Lebanese and Syrians] have particular viewpoints but I think we will ultimately reach a paper acceptable to all.

[Unidentified correspondent] Lebanon had particular conditions. For example, we cannot (?receive) an Israeli official or minister here. Do we still have this condition?

[Al-Hariri] I will not go into details. But I have noticed that media reports suggest there is a big problem. There is no big problem; viewpoints are being offered. The atmosphere is not tense; it is positive. It is natural that people have [different] viewpoints. It is not natural for the United States, France, Lebanon, and Syria to offer identical papers. This is impossible. It is only natural to have differences but, through discussions, a paper approved by all the sides can be achieved.

[Correspondent] Concerning the consultative committee on aid, do you expect...

[Al-Hariri, interrupting] I am taking care of this. Undoubtedly, the contacts we are holding now have two objectives: The first is political [words indistinct], in the next stage, a delicate stage needing every possible diplomatic effort. The second objective is to obtain assistance and easy long-term loans. This will take time and needs organization. As you know, it is not easy to obtain aid today. International aid in today's world is going to two places: Gaza, after the Oslo agreement, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, after the agreement there. In both places things are not going so well as far as aid is concerned. So we should not expect to get aid easily and quickly or after a single visit. The Lebanese people must know this. But I think we can obtain assistance that is useful to our country. But we must be patient. The most important thing is that we receive the aid without political conditions and in a way that serves Lebanon's interests; the aid must go to development projects. Now we are trying to obtain assistance, not only for the south, but for the whole country. This clause is clearly mentioned in the April understanding, namely, aid to rebuild Lebanon, not only to repair the damage in the south. This will take time; it needs organization and it involves many countries. It will take time but I think we will ultimately achieve our objectives.

[Correspondent] Thank you Prime Minister. [end recording]

This was Prime Minister al-Hariri's statement. Later President Ilyas al-Hirawi received Deputy Sami al-Khatib and they reviewed developments.

Lebanon: Al-Hariri, Buwayz Leave for Damascus

NC0605163596 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1530 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri and Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz left for Damascus at 1700 [1400 GMT] today on the first leg of an Arab and European tour to discuss the level of the committee that will monitor the implementation of the April understanding, especially after the emergence of differences between the U.S.-Israeli view and the Arab- European view of this committee. The tour also aims to revitalize efforts to implement the resolutions on the reconstruction of Lebanon, resolutions made during the consultations that resulted in the cessation of the recent Israeli aggression.

Washington is trying to impose a ministerial level on this committee in an effort to make it an alternative to the international framework for implementing Security Council Resolution 425; Lebanon and Syria, backed by the EU, want the committee to be formed at the level of experts, so that the committee's mission will be confined to preventing the violation of the April understanding. This will also ensure that Resolution 425 is not be weakened by entering it into the mazes of other texts.

Prime Minister al-Hariri and Buwayz will meet with Syrian officials in Damascus. Prime Minister al-Hariri will fly to Rome tomorrow. He will then leave for Brussels and then Paris, on the basis that France is one of the guarantors of the April understanding and is a member of the committee.

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Syria: Khaddam, Lebanon's al-Hariri, Buwayz Discuss Monitors' Work

JN0605205596 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 2037 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Vice President 'Abd-al-Halim Khaddam received Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri and Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz at 1830 [1530 GMT] today. Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' also attended the meeting. The talks dealt with the proposals related to the monitoring group mentioned in the April understanding. The meeting participants were in agreement on presenting a joint plan for the mechanism of the work of the monitoring group.

Syria: Papers Say Washington 'Largely Abandoned' Peace Role

JN0705074396 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0450 GMT 7 May 96

[Press review]

[FBIS Translated Text] In its editorial, TISHRIN comments on the findings of a UN team investigating the Qana massacre. The findings show that the Israeli Army deliberately targeted a UN center in which more than 5,000 Lebanese civilians took refuge to escape Israeli bombardment.

TISHRIN says: This is a premeditated crime. Its perpetrators should be put on trial. What causes concern, however, is the pressure being put on the United Nations by one of its most influential members to delay publishing the report of the international mission or to not publish it at all. The pretext cited here is that the report would have repercussions on the cease- fire in southern Lebanon.

TISHRIN adds: UN officials expect the report to draw sharp reactions from all over the world. The report would also put Israel in an unenviable position and embarrass the United States, which, one way or another, gave Israel the go-ahead to enter Lebanon. The paper says no one should cover up this crime, whatever the pretexts. The crime is an established fact and the criminal is well known. The world must not remain silent about this crime.

TISHRIN concludes: It is a crime, in the full sense of the word. The Israeli criminal must be punished.

AL-BA'TH speaks about the tendentious campaign launched by Israel to reduce the impact of its defeat as a result of its recent savage aggression against Lebanon. Through this campaign, Israel claims that the cease-fire understanding in southern Lebanon is part of the peace process and achieved some of its objectives.

AL-BA'TH underlines the firm principles that govern the positions of Syria and Lebanon on the peace process, asserting that peace is a strategic option for the two fraternal countries. This option is part of the framework of the Madrid formula and is based on Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, and 425, as well as the land-for-peace principle.

AL-BA'TH adds: The United States has an international and legal responsibility to allow the peace process to reach its objective. This requires that it play its role honestly and fairly, taking into consideration the interests of all concerned parties and the importance of achieving a just, comprehensive, and honorable peace.

AL-BA'TH says the recent incidents, especially the Zionist aggression and the ensuing developments, show that Washington has largely abandoned its responsibility and role and become a sponsor and protector of Israel and its ambitions, and even its aggression. This causes the United States to lose credibility not only with the Arabs but with the whole world. The April understanding and the monitoring committee emanating from it have nothing to do with the peace negotiations, which are exclusively held within the framework of the Madrid conference.

AL-BA'TH concludes: The constants of the peace process are the basis of this Middle East process. If Israel and the United States adhere to these constants, the peace process will achieve its objectives.

In a commentary on the same issue, AL-THAWRAH blames Israel for obstructing the peace process. The paper asks: Which party withdrew its delegation from Maryland without a reasonable justification? Which party increased military tension in the region, attacked Lebanon, caused destruction, and committed murder and massacres in their ugliest forms? Which party has weaseled out of the requirements for peace, has refused to comply with the resolutions of international legitimacy, and has insisted on imposing its self-styled peace, which closely resembles surrender by the Arabs?

AL-THAWRAH says: Of course, the answer is clear. Israel is the one that slammed all doors in the face of peace. Israel is also the one attacking the Arabs, threatening their security, and trying to impose hegemony and custodianship on them? Israel went public about its rejection of the land-for-peace principle, which was stated in the U.S. initiative. This means that Israel is to blame for the stalemate in the peace process. Israel thinks that a just peace contradicts its aggressive objectives and schemes and runs counter to its ideology, which it believes can grow and prosper only through occupation and expansion.

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AL-THAWRAH thinks it is strange that after all it did, Israel found some people in the U.S. Administration who still defend its conduct and policy, offering it generous rewards, and finding excuses for its continuing attacks on the Arabs.

AL-THAWRAH concludes: In any event, Syria shall remain true to itself, its people, and its nation. Syria shall continue to open its arms for a just and comprehensive peace. It still hopes for a fair U.S. stand that rehabilitates the peace process and helps to achieve a solution that ends injustice and occupation and allows all peoples of the region to live in security, peace, and dignity, far from all manifestations of hegemony, threats, and aggression.

Syria: Commentary Criticizes U.S. 'Bias' Toward Israel

JN0605153496 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1130 GMT 6 May 96

[Station commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] Dear listeners: Not only did the United States prevent the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly from issuing resolutions condemning Israel for its brutal aggression on Lebanon and for its crimes of mass murder and the destruction of residential areas and public utilities, it also did its best to block the publication of a UN report confirming that the shelling of the UN forces in Qana was premeditated and that Israel knew there were hundreds of civilians, mostly women, children, and old people, who had taken refuge at the Fijian forces' camp to escape the hellish Israeli shells that rained on them from land and air, destroyed their houses, and even chased them from the roads.

Although the world denounced that massacre, which martyred more than 100 persons and wounded about 150 more; although the ugly and brutal crime was directed at the United Nations, whose flag flies over that base; and although the United Nations was targeted, just like the Lebanese civilians in that base, the United States had no objection to being the only state that supported Israel by blocking the condemnation of this crime against the United Nations and the innocent Lebanese citizens.

Moreover, the United States received Shim'on Peres as a conqueror and signed an accord that enables Israel to obtain the most advanced and destructive U.S. weapons. All this occurred while the bodies of the victims of Israel's shelling were being piled in refrigerators because the rain of shells from the land, sea, and air prevented their burial.

There is no doubt that the United States harmed itself and its credibility in bringing about a true peace in the region. It is impossible for the United States to play such a role if its continues its bias toward Israel while the latter commits the ugliest crimes and massacres and ignores human laws and values, as well as the resolutions of the international legitimacy.

It goes without saying that it is impossible for the United States to simultaneously remain biased toward Israel and win the Arabs' confidence in its role. However, we still have some hope that the United States will wake up and realize the extent of the damage that was caused to its reputation and prestige as a result of its insistence on backing and protecting Israel and defending its crimes. It is not good for the United States and its people in the long run to make other people see it as Israel's partner, which bears the consequences of Israel's crimes and its feverish drive to shed the blood of innocent Arabs.

The Qana massacre is too big to be covered up by preventing the publication of the UN report that proves that Israel committed that crime on purpose. The sight of the torn bodies of children, women, and old people will remain in the mind of the world as another Israeli disgrace. It will also remain as one of the lighthouses built by the martyrs as torches for our nation and as an example of sacrifice in defense of the dignity of the homeland and the freedom of the citizen.

On the anniversary of the 6 May martyrs, we can ask the following question: Where is Jamal Pasha, the butcher, [commander of the Ottoman Army in Syria]? Where is his Ottoman Empire? What did he achieve for himself and his empire by hanging some Arabs in Damascus and Beirut? He was cursed by the blood of the martyrs, and he was killed, branded with his disgrace. The empire, which he believed he could strengthen through the blood of the victims and preserve its prestige and unity, collapsed, and the martyrs who were slain in God's way lived in the conscience of their nation because they were the noblest people in the world, as President Hafiz al-Asad said.

Syria: SANA, IRNA Sign Cooperation Agreement

JN0605202996 Damascus SANA in Arabic 1730 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Damascus, 6 May (SANA)—The SYRIAN ARAB NEWS AGENCY [SANA] and the ISLAMIC REPUBLIC NEWS AGENCY [IRNA] today signed a new cooperation agreement that includes the exchange of news via satellite.

The agreement was signed at SANA headquarters by SANA Director General Dr. Fayiz al-Sayigh and IRNA Director General Faridon Wardi Najad [name as transliterated].

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The new agreement provides for exchanging news, photos, and press information between the two friendly agencies via satellite and coordinating the positions of the two agencies in professional organizations and unions at the regional and international levels. It provides for training and exchange visits by journalists to enrich their professional experience. It also stipulates support for efforts to keep up with technological advancements in today's world of communication, coordinate the work of the two agencies' correspondents, and enhance the presence of the two agencies in the world capitals and in covering world events.

The two directors general exchanged speeches to mark the occasion.

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Afghanistan

Afghanistan: Hekmatyar Meets Iranian Envoys

LD0605180396 (Clandestine) Radio Message of Freedom in Dari to Afghanistan 0730 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Brother Hekmatyar, Amir of Hezb-e Eslami, has met Gholam Reza Haddadi, ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Afghanistan, and Iran's consul general in the center of Laghman province. A Radio Message of Freedom correspondent reports from Laghman that brother Hekmatyar met Mr. Haddadi, the ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Consul General Bahrami, and Shakeri and Vaziri, members of the consulate, at Shahid Mohammad Naser Mansur Guest House in Kalakot, centre of Laghman Province (?yesterday). Fazl Haq Mojahed, commander of the 1st Corps of Nangarhar, was also present at the meeting during which the current situation in the country was discussed. Brother Hekmatyar explained Hezb-e Eslami's stance.

The report adds that yesterday afternoon Gholam Reza Haddadi met Fazl Haq Mojahed and Haji Abdol Qadir, the governor of Nangarhar, in Jalalabad.

Afghanistan: BAKHTAR Condemns Taleban Attack on Kabul

LD0605205896 Tehran IRNA in English 2033 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kabul, May 6, IRNA — Afghanistan's state-run BAKHTAR INFORMATION AGENCY (BIA) here today condemning Saturday's [4 May] rocket attacks by the Taleban militia on the Afghan capital which resulted in heavy damage to the Iranian embassy building, called it a "terrorist act against the people of Afghanistan and foreign citizens in the country."

BAKHTAR, saying that the attack exposed the "double-standards" of the militia, commented that perhaps it was Taleban's way of replying to Iran's efforts to restore peace in Afghanistan.

The Iranian embassy suffered damage in Saturday's rocket attacks which left two embassy staffers injured. The condition of the Iranian diplomats has been described as satisfactory by Iranian Ambassador Gholam Reza Haddadi.

The Afghan news agency, lauded Saturdays' remarks of the Iranian ambassador who said that Iran will, however, continue its humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people.

India

India: Minister, 9 Others Killed by 'Suspected Militants' in Assam

BK0705010796 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0035 GMT 7 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The rural development minister of Assam, Mr. Nagen Neog, and nine others, including eight of his security personnel, were shot dead by suspected militants at Simrijan village in Golaghat District of upper Assam yesterday evening. According to official reports reaching Guwahati, Mr. Neog along with his security personnel was on his way to Simrijan near the Assam-Nagaland border when suspected militants ambushed his carcade at about 1945 and opened indiscriminate fire, killing Mr. Neog, eight security personnel, and the driver on the spot. Mr. Neog was the contesting candidate of the INC [Indian National Congress] from Golaghat assembly constituency. Senior civil and police officials have rushed to the spot with additional security forces. The militants also took away all the arms and ammunition of the security personnel before fleeing.

India: 2 'Afghan Mercenaries' Among 20 Killed in Kashmir

BK0605163096 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1530 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In Jammu and Kashmir, two Afghan mercenaries and one militant were among the 20 persons killed during the last 24 hours in militancy related violence. In Srinagar, militants kidnapped 10 Nepalese laborers and shot eight of them in Laughton area; two escaped. Two Afghan mercenaries were killed in an encounter with security forces in Kupwara sector, while one militant was killed in Anantnag District. Security forces arrested 12 militants during search operations.

India: Security Forces in Kashmir Preparing for 'Peaceful' Polls

BK0605161496 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1530 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In Jammu and Kashmir, which is witnessing elections for the first time in seven years, the Army and other central security forces took positions for conducting a peaceful poll. Patrolling has been intensified along the international border to check infiltration of Pakistan-trained militants.

Center will take all possible steps to ensure free and fair poll in Jammu and Kashmir, particularly in the militancy affected areas. The home minister, Mr. S.B.

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Chavan, gave this assurance to the Panthers Party president, professor Bhim Singh, this afternoon. Prof. Singh briefed the home minister about the criminal activities of the foreign mercenaries in Doda and Udhampur districts.

The Election Commission has made special arrangements to enable the Kashmiri migrant electors to cast their votes through postal ballots. These arrangements have been made for the voters in Baramula, Srinagar, and Anantnag parliamentary constituencies.

India: Congressmen View Leadership Issue, Power Struggle

BK0705034396 Delhi Doordarshan Television Network in English 1530 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The environment minister, Mr. Rajesh Pilot, has said that the Congress Parliamentary Party alone could decide the leadership issue after the elections. Speaking in New Delhi today, he said nobody else has the right to talk on the issue. Senior party leader Mr. B.P. Maurya said this is not the time to raise the issue at all. Our correspondent Ravi Ramakrishna reports:

[Begin recording] [Ramakrishna] The statement of the union minister, Karunakaran, calling for the separation of the Congress party presidentship from that of the prime minister's post has evoked strong reactions from the Congress party. Several Congress leaders, including union ministers, chief ministers of the Congress-ruled states, and pradesh [state] Congress leaders have asserted their support to their party president. They also ruled out any change in the party leadership. Karunakaran, however, thinks the issue of separating these two posts has to be considered.

[Karunakaran] No, I told you the reason. It is not the individual. Prime minister's security is very much tight. The Congressmen should have direct approach to their president. These difficulties have to be overcome. How best we can overcome should be discussed.

[Ramakrishna] Senior leaders in the party feel that time now is not fit for discussing such issues.

[B.P. Maurya, Congress general secretary — name identified from screen caption] It's a first thing. No doubt Mr. Karunakaran is very senior leader of the Congress party. He is member of the Working Committee and he is cabinet minister also. He has been chief minister; very seasoned politician, but unfortunately I have to say this. This is not the time to talk like this.

[Karunakaran] I thought a Congress person who can have more time for the Congress activity will be addition, but I did not say one man, one post. I said this issue may be discussed at the forum after the election.

[Ramakrishna] The party president, Mr. Narasimha Rao, has ruled out the possibility of any power struggle within the party.

[Rao, from aboard his aircraft] I don't see any such struggle coming. I expect to remain where my party wants me to be.

[Ramakrishna] He said he would be discussing the issue with the union minister.

[Rao] I will call him and invite him for a cup of tea and ask him to reproduce what he has told you gentlemen.

[Karunakaran] I used to meet him. Whenever I go to him, he gives me a cup of tea. There is nothing new....

[Ramakrishna, interrupting] So did he meet you on this issue today?

[Karunakaran] [word indistinct] Whenever he calls me, definitely I will (?go).

[Ramakrishna] So, he has not yet met you?

[Karunakaran] No, not. [end recording]

India: Prime Minister Comments on Kashmir Elections

BK0705071796 Madras THE HINDU in English 6 May 96 p 1

[Unattributed report]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Prime Minister, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, today asserted that Pakistan's "evil and nefarious designs" to grab any part of Jammu and Kashmir, especially the Valley, will be foiled.

Winding up the election campaign in Jammu for his party candidate at a public meeting here, Mr. Rao said Pakistan might do any mischief but "Jammu and Kashmir will remain a permanent part of India."

Lok Sabha elections were being held in the State to demonstrate to the world that the State was an integral part of the country and its people had the right to elect their own representatives.

Elections were also necessary to defeat conspiracies, whether inside or outside, and bring peace and restore normality in the State.

Mr. Rao, who is also Congress president, said the right to franchise was denied to the people of the State for more than six years because of the situation created by the forces outside the country.

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The Prime Minister also criticised the role of political parties for not adopting a positive stand on efforts of the Government and the Congress to restore democracy in the State in past.

He said Pakistan was not interested in attacking India or Kashmir. "It knows from the experience of last three wars that it cannot attack India and snatch away Kashmir from us. So it thought of creating disturbances in the Valley and making the people suffer."

Terming the goings-on in Kashmir a proxy war, he said only elected representatives could identify the outside elements and defeat them.

The Prime Minister said elections had to be held in the State sooner or later and he would have been happy had Assembly elections also been held along with the Parliamentary polls.

It was immaterial which party or group won the elections. The State's representatives in the Lok Sabha could ventilate people's grievances and problems in Parliament which could be redressed in time.

The Prime Minister said his party was keen on holding elections to the State Assembly too. The plan was to hold Assembly elections in December last year but they could not be held due to unavoidable reasons. But, he gave a categorical assurance to the people that elections to the; Assembly would follow the Lok Sabha elections.

Mr. Rao also made it clear that nobody would be allowed to disrupt the electoral process in the first phase in the Jammu and Ladakh Parliamentary constituencies on May 7. All arrangements had been made to hold orderly, peaceful free and fair elections. The feedback from the State Government authorities was encouraging, he added.

He was happy that the people of the State were responding positively to the Government's efforts to restore normality. This had unnerved the pro-Pakistani elements as they were feeling today that their game was up. Referring to the anti-election campaign, the Prime Minister said they were doing so "because they see their future threatened by these elections." These elements were not sure of their standing among the people that was why they were reluctant to participate in the elections.

He lauded the people for deciding to participate in the elections in spite of the Pakistani threats.

Referring to election violence he said violent incidents do take place here and there but that did not mean that "we should say goodbye to the election process". Even during recent elections there were some violent incidents in different parts of the country and at some of the polling stations repolling was ordered by the Election Commission but on the whole all over the country wherever elections to the Lok Sabha as well as to some State Assemblies were held, they were orderly and peaceful.

Defending Article 370 which confers special status on the State, the Prime Minister said internal autonomy guaranteed to the people under the Article had enabled the people to progress in all fields independently. The Congress was opposed to abrogating the article, he added.

India: Prime Minister Rules Out Congress 'Power Struggle'

BK0705065096 Bombay THE TIMES OF INDIA in English 6 May 96 p 1

[Unattributed report]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao on Sunday [5 May] ruled out the possibility of any power struggle in the Congress after the elections and said confidently the party would form the next government with a "clear majority."

"I do not see the possibility of any succession struggle as there is no conflict over the leadership," Mr Rao told newsmen on board his special aircraft while flying back to the Capital after an election tour of Jammu. He was replying to questions about speculation in some circles that his leadership would be challenged after the polls.

Mr Rao's clarifications came in the wake of remarks by senior party functionary and CWC [Congress Working Committee] member K. Karunakaran that the posts of party president and Prime Minister would be separated after the elections as the present arrangement had weakened the Congress. Although he answered questions about Mr Karunakaran's observations, he sought to make light of all that the CWC member had said.

"I am clear that I will be at the place where the party wants me," Mr Rao remarked when pressed to comment on the chances of a leadership change. Asked about the speculation that the party might "dump" him after the polls, the Prime Minister said: "I won't react."

When his attention was drawn to Mr Karunakaran's remarks about organisational changes in the Congress Mr Rao said: "I do not know what he has said. I'll invite him for a cup of tea to ascertain his views."

Asked about the chances of the return of rebel Congress leaders like Mr Madhavrao Scindia, Mr Arjun Singh, Mr N.D. Tiwari, Mr G.K. Moopanar and Mr P. Chidambaram in case the party failed to get a Majority, Prime Minister said they had left the party as and floated

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their own outfits. All matters relating to the return of rebels to the party would be decided by the Congress Working Committee.

As for the question of the Congress failing to get a majority and the possible scenario, Mr Rao added: "We will cross the bridge when we come to it."

Senior Congress leaders have expressed confidence in the leadership of Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao and said there was no need for a change.

In a joint statement 11 Union ministers, chief ministers of 10 Congress-ruled states and AICC [All India Congress Committee] office bearers said on Sunday, the Congressmen were capable of sorting out "intra-party issues within the respective and appropriate party for a without any unsolicited and ex-gratia advice from outside."

The statement comes in the wake of Congress Working Committee member K Karunakaran's demand for a change in leadership. Mr Karunakaran had expressed the view that the posts of party president and parliamentary party leader be split. He had said that in the changed circumstances, the Congress president needs to devote more time to strengthen the organisation.

"In its long history the Indian National Congress had never deserted its leader and more so at the time of crisis," the leaders said.

Releasing the statement at the residence of labour minister G Venkataswamy, external affairs minister Pranab Mukherjee said the leader of the party was the "kingpin" in an election and there was no question of a change in the leadership.

The cabinet ministers, who have signed the statement are: Manmohan Singh, S.B. Chavan, Pranab Mukherjee, N K P Salve, Ghulam Nabi Azad, G Venkat Swamy, P A Sangma, Jagdish Tytler, Santosh Mohan Deb, Ajit Singh and Ram Lakhan Singh Yadav.

The chief ministers who have signed the statement are: S C Jamir, Harcharan Singh Brar, Bhajan Lal, J B Patnaik, Virbhadra Singh, Bhoomidhar Barman, Rishang Keishing, S C Marak, Lalthanhawla and A.K. Antony.

Meanwhile, AICC general secretary B P Maurya said in Ahmedabad the "irresponsible utterances" by Mr Karunakaran "may attract disciplinary action."

Describing the remarks of Mr Karunakaran, as "unfortunate," he said that for the "one man-one post," a resolution had been passed thrice and it was decided that it was not applicable to the Prime Minister.

India: Final Phase of Elections Begins; Counting To Begin 8 May

BK0705044296 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0245 GMT 7 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The third and final phase of polling began this morning for 183 Lok Sabha seats in 12 states and 154 West Bengal assembly seats. The counting of votes for the first and second phase of polling for 354 Lok Sabha and 762 assembly seats will start at 0800 [0230 GMT] tomorrow morning. Counting for the third phase will be taken up on Thursday morning.

Barring four Lok Sabha constituencies in Jammu and Kashmir and one each in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, the polling process is complete in the entire country. There are nearly 5,000 candidates in the fray for the Lok Sabha and more than 1,000 candidates for the assembly seats. In the most sensitive areas, central and state security forces have mounted high alert and intensified patrolling along the international border to prevent untoward incidents during the poll.

Ladakh and Jammu constituencies in Jammu and Kashmir are witnessing polling today. It is after seven years that any election is taking place in the state. Our correspondent describes the polling scene in the state:

[Begin recording] It's after seven years any election is being held in Jammu and Kashmir. Polling in Ladakh and Jammu constituencies started on a low-key note this morning. Small queues were seen at some polling stations in Jammu, Rajaori, and Punch cities. Security on the border and Line of Control has been tightened to foil any infiltration attempt by Pakistan-trained militants. A few polling stations close to the Line of Control have been shifted to adjoining safer locations. Jammu has 30 candidates and Ladakh only three. Both constituencies are witnessing keen contest. Ajit Singh reporting from Jammu. [end recording]

Reports received from various parts of the country also say that antisocial elements have been taken into custody on the eve of the poll. An electorate of 21 crore will be involved for 24 parliamentary seats in Maharashtra, 14 in Gujarat, 52 in Uttar Pradesh, 20 in Madhya Pradesh, 22 in West Bengal, nine in Orissa, 34 in Bihar, two each in Jammu and Kashmir, Manipur, and Tripura, and one each in Mizoram and Nagaland. Polling will also be held this morning in the remaining three tribal segments of Mandi Lok Sabha constituency in Himachal Pradesh, besides two assembly by-elections in Bihar and one each in Maharashtra and Orissa.

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Bihar goes for polling this morning amid unprecedented and tight security. The AIR correspondent who went round several booths in Ranchi reports:

[Begin recording] In Bihar, polling began in 14 Lok Sabha seats spread over 18 districts of Jharkhand region amid unprecedented security arrangements. Long queues are being seen in a number of polling booths in Ranchi Lok Sabha seat, disapproving apprehension about low turnout following a dull election campaign. This is Neeraj Pathak from Ranchi. [end recording]

Mumbai [Bombay, the capital of Maharashtra, is seeing lot of enthusiasm among the people for casting their votes. Our correspondent reports about the polling scene:

[Begin recording] Polling for the remaining 24 of the 48 constituencies spread over Mumbai, Konkan, and western Maharashtra regions, and Chembur assembly constituency of Mumbai began a short while ago. In Mumbai, polling began on a dull note. Few people were seen at the polling center where I went for voting and three others which I visited. Security personnel were, however, seen at strategic locations. Additional security measures, including helicopter surveillance, have been taken to prevent any untoward incident. This is Mohan Chandak reporting for Delhi. [end recording]

The state of Uttar Pradesh is also having polling this morning and the city of Allahabad goes for polling amid tight security. Our correspondent says that there is eagerness and enthusiasm among the young and the old to cast their ballots. Here is a report:

[Begin recording] Tight security arrangements have been made in all the three constituencies of Allahabad. Mobile security squads of PAC [Provincial Armed Constabulary] and paramilitary forces are constantly making rounds of the polling stations in different areas of the city. In many polling centers, people started coming to exercise their franchise since early in the morning and young and women voters turned up in large numbers on several polling booths. This is Rajiv Chaturvedi reporting from Allahabad. [end recording]

India: BJP Leader Interviewed on Political Scene

BK0605133796 Delhi BUSINESS STANDARD in English 26 Apr 96 p 2

["Excerpts" of an interview with A.B. Vajpayee, leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP], by Bharati Sinha in Bihar; date not given]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Business Standard: You have said that the Congress has accomplished its historical role and now it should be dismantled. Could you elaborate?

AB Vajpayee: After Independence, the Congress decided to tread the path of mixed economy. That was a sensible decision. It recognised the role of private enterprise and intervention of state sector in certain key areas. It was the later shift toward socialism that created distortions. As against this, our party has always believed in a competitive economy. We have always been against indiscriminate expansion of the state sector. Even this could have been successful had the government matched this with independent skill development rather than putting the country's resources into the hands of bureaucrats for management.

The economic agenda was drawn keeping the political advantage in mind. I still remember the comments of Mohan Kumarmangalam, a member of Indira's cabinet, on coal nationalisation, in Parliament. He had said by coal nationalisation the party had created a strong support base among coal workers.

BS: But it's the Narasimha Rao government that has brought about economic reforms in the country.

ABV: It is not by choice. They have been forced to do that by economic compulsions.

BS: What should be the role of the state?

ABV: We need less government in the economic field, more in the social sector like literacy, reducing child mortality and malnutrition, drinking water. The latter itself is a gigantic task. Imagine, there is a drinking water shortage in Lucknow where the Gomati flows.

BS: You sound like PV Narasimha Rao.

ABV: Rao has been talking about it. But he has done nothing in the last five years. Leave aside the social sector, he has even neglected the infrastructure sector.

BS: So, the agenda of Rao is similar to yours. The difference is only in implementation?

ABV: Yes a lot of it involves good governance. But even the agenda is different. We want a balanced growth of the economy. This government is taking reforms to the extreme. We are against indiscriminate privatisation of the public sector. We want PSUs [public sector units] like SAIL [Steel Authority of India, Ltd.] and Bhel [Bharat Heavy Electricals, Ltd.] to emerge as multinationals.

In fact, Rao also realised this and gave the slogan of reforms with a human face during the last assembly elections. But it remained a mere slogan. He did not do anything.

The difference is also in approach. The Congress' approach has been a doctrinaire approach, first for

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socialism and now for free economy. Ambedkar had refused to include socialism in the Constitution saying he did not want to bind the coming generations to a particular ideology. The Congress party smuggled it in later as part of its electoral strategy.

BS: Would your government remove socialism from the Constitution?

ABV: No. It has already become redundant.

BS: In the last five years, your party has shown a shift from the right of the centre towards the centre. A similar shift is witnessed in the Left parties towards the centre. The Congress is being gradually squeezed out. Who do you think would ultimately replace the Congress?

ABV: We have never been a rightist party. Swatantra Party was. So was Rama Rajya Parishad. On social issues, we have opposed both these forces. We supported land reforms, abolition of zamindari [feudal system], even led movements against zamindari in Rajasthan. We opposed the practice of sati [cremating living wives along with deceased husbands].

Ours is a middle-of-the-road party. There is no place in this country for an extreme right or extreme left party. But middle-of-the-road parties must have their own distinct identity. Our cultural nationalism gives us a distinct identity.

The Congress lost its identity following the vote bank politics. The Left could never understand this country.

It is a transitional period. Such an old party as the Congress is coming to an end. It is good that the BJP is in a position to replace it.

BS: Your slogan of one nation, one people, one culture appears to mean uniformity of culture.

ABV: No. This does not mean imposing the Hindu religion. Religion does not change culture. Why was Bangladesh born? It had the same religion as Pakistan, but their cultures were different. It's culture that makes separate nations. If there is a difference in Iran and Iraq, it is because of their cultures.

We are not for uniformity of culture. Diversity is the richness of our culture.

BS: But you want a uniform civil code.

ABV: That is a different matter. After all, there is one criminal law in the country. If the Muslim brothers are not prepared for it now, we can discuss and give them time to adjust. But there should at least be a commitment in principle for a uniform civil code.

BS: Why is it that your party did not succeed for the last 48 years?

ABV: Because Nehru started a tirade against us. We were called anti-Muslim. Sitaram Kesri had once said on the floor of the House that they (the Congress) have been taking Muslim votes by instilling fear in them and not by trying to change them.

We want to bring the Muslims to the mainstream. Their children still go to madrasas [religious school]. Once primary education is made compulsory, they would start going to normal schools. That will make a lot of difference.

BS: The association of your party with communal riots in the people's mind is very strong. How do you react to this?

ABV: The perception is changing now. We are ruling in many states and there are no communal riots. A BJP government at the Centre will deal with communal riots with an iron hand, irrespective of their being Hindus' or Muslims'.

The minority issue would have been solved after partition itself, had all the political parties taken it as a national problem rather than an electoral problem.

Which country will allow influx of foreign nationals? Here people are quiet on the large influx of Bangladeshis. We are opposing it not because they are Muslims. It is only incidental that they are Muslims.

BS: The Indian polity and society seems to be rearranging itself. This is being reflected in various permutations and combinations on the political scene. Do you see a polarisation into two national parties or forces with Congress disintegrating?

ABV: There cannot be a two party system in this country like the British system. There will be three to four parties on the national scene. The situation will be clearer after this election.

There will be a realignment of forces after the election. If the Congress loses, there will be a split in the party. A new group might join hands with the Janata Dal.

BS: Can a part of the Congress come to you?

ABV: The Samata Party and George Fernandes have already come close to us. Some more might come from the Congress.

BS: Your party has support bases in limited areas, it is almost absent in the south and the northeast. How do you claim to form a government?

ABV: If the Janata Party could form a government on the basis of its support largely in the north with the help of a wave, why not us?

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BS: But do you see a wave in your favour?

ABV: The way things are moving, I feel our party can get majority.

BS: There is a general perception that there will be a lot of horsetrading after elections. Would you be left behind?

ABV: (In a lighter vein) Ham bhi atna tattoo dodainge (We will also run our mule).

My party is considering every possibility in the post poll scenario and government formation. But if we are not able to form a government, we will not mind sitting in the Opposition.

BS: If your party emerges as the single largest but is short of majority and the President invites you to form a government, what will you do?

ABV: Main badishan sejaunga (I will go with great pride). We will explore support from smaller parties. Who and on what condition they can support us will depend on the post-poll situation, on factors like who gets how many seats.

BS: Your party is projecting you as the future prime minister. What about the cabinet?

ABV: Main akela hi sawa lakh ke barabar hun (I alone is equal to one and a quarter lakh).

BS: Do you see the possibility of Narasimha Rao coming back to power?

ABV: Things are changing very fast. But nothing can be ruled out at present.

BS: There is a talk of Jyoti Basu becoming prime minister with the support of non-BJP parties?

ABV: I don't see this happening. Lalu Yadav will not let this happen.

BS: You have not been talking about the Ram temple in your election speeches. Why?

ABV: Ram is in my heart, not in my speeches. I have never spoken of Ram temple in my speeches. The issue itself was a local one. It became a major issue because of the acts of ommissions and commissions of the various governments at the Centre.

BS: Narasimha Rao is said to be a good friend of yours. How do you find him as a person?

ABV: I don't want to say anything on this.

BS: You have said that if you came to power, you would prosecute Rao?

ABV: I never said that. I have been misquoted. What I said was that there should be an inquiry against him on charges made by SK Jain. Jain said he gave Rs [rupees] 3.5 crore to Rao. I don't know what is the truth. I have never hit anyone below the belt.

BS: You have been seeing crowds, addressing meetings for long. Do you see a difference in the crowd and their response to you now?

ABV: I see a lot of difference. Firstly, it is mostly the youth that is thronging to my meetings now. There is a lot of expectation on their faces. People want change. Probably, in the times of the politics of hawala [money scandal] and ghotala [corruption] they see a person who is out of all this.

India: BJP Official Views Party Policies, Kashmir

AU0605151696 Hamburg DER SPIEGEL in German 6 May 96 pp 160-166

[Interview with Atal Behari Vajpayee, floor leader of the Indian Bharatiya Janata Party, by Erich Follath and Tiziano Terzani in Ahmadabad; date not given: "Guru of the Nation"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [DER SPIEGEL] Mr. Vaypayee, you are loved as a poet by many people — you write sentimental poems — and you are the candidate for the prime minister's office of the chauvinist BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party]. What is a refined man like you doing in a bed of poisonous snakes?

[Vajpayee] Indeed, politics and poetry do not go well together. The writing of poems requires time, leisure, a clear head — all that one does not have as a politician. For a prolonged period of time, I have only taken one day off a year, my birthday, for writing poetry. The poet inside me must wait, it is the politician's turn.

[DER SPIEGEL] Why?

[Vajpayee] Because the country needs me. India is at the crossroads: The Congress Party is morally bankrupt and politically at its end, Prime Minister Rao will be swept away by these elections, and new leadership is required. We will provide it after our victory.

[DER SPIEGEL] This is exactly what frightens people, not only in your country. The 1996 BJP election platform mentions India's "option for nuclear weapons," and you want to give Delhi's security forces "a free hand against the threat from Pakistani terrorism." Does this not mean aggression against your neighbors? Does this not mean war?

[Vajpayee] Armed conflicts will probably take place on the border, but there will be no new big war between India and Pakistan.

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[DER SPIEGEL] And why are you banking so much on nuclear weapons?

[Vajpayee] As a deterrent. We will not be the first to use them, but our neighbors, China and Pakistan, are also not dispensing with these weapons. If there is a fixed timetable for all nuclear powers to destroy their nuclear warheads, one can count on our cooperation — but only then. At the moment, five nuclear powers want to secure their dominance; this is nuclear apartheid. We will not go along with it.

[DER SPIEGEL] In 1974, India detonated a bomb, then never again. Will you start a test series when you come to power?

[Vajpayee] France has done it and China is doing it. These are strong countries that do not listen to international opinion. India is also a big, strong country. Therefore, I want to leave the option of nuclear weapons open and, of course, the possibility of testing them.

[DER SPIEGEL] Kashmir is the hottest of all unsolved problems between India and Pakistan, the border is regarded as one of the most dangerous of the world. The former principality is occupied and torn apart between New Delhi and Islamabad. Do you have a solution?

[Vajpayee] This is quite simple: Pakistan should forget Kashmir.

[DER SPIEGEL] I beg your pardon? All of Kashmir?

[Vajpayee] Yes. Kashmir is none of Pakistan's business. Twice, Islamabad started a war to conquer it; each time, the hostile army failed. The Pakistanis will never get Kashmir, we will not permit that.

[DER SPIEGEL] You also want to withhold the right to self-determination and autonomy from the Kashmiris, although India has committed itself to holding a referendum.

[Vajpayee] For almost 50 years, Jammu and Kashmir have been part of India as a federal state.

[DER SPIEGEL] However, world opinion sees this differently. India's constitution at least guarantees a special status for the state, which is occupied by you and shaped by Muslims. Do you also want to abolish that?

[Vajpayee] This status was only intended as a temporary solution and should have been abolished long ago. Kashmir has to be incorporated into the rest of India as quickly as possible, completely, also formally, and without reservations. It cannot claim a special role because 3 million Muslims live there in a valley and it suits them.

[DER SPIEGEL] Your party is regarded as a collection of haters of Muslims, and now you also sound like it.

[Vajpayee] We do not hate Muslims, we are not against Muslims!

[DER SPIEGEL] Why do you not have a single Muslim candidate on your BJP ticket?

[Vajpayee] We would have liked to have some. However, we chose our candidates according to a single criterion — their chance of winning.

[DER SPIEGEL] Which shows how you assess your voters. Not much more than every eighth person in India declares himself for Islam. These are about 120 million of 930 million people, and they feel increasingly estranged from the Hindu majority. What makes the Muslims so threatening for the BJP that it wants to deprive them of minority rights?

[Vajpayee] Like all others, the Muslims will have to fully integrate into the rest of the society. All children have to go to the same schools and use the same playgrounds and the same recreation rooms. There cannot be a state within the state for them. They have to adjust, this has nothing to do with chauvinism.

[DER SPIEGEL] You proclaim in the BJP election manifesto "one nation, one people, one culture." But that means: Hinduism above all. Is it not chauvinist if one deprives the Muslims of their own traditions and their culture?

[Vajpayee] There is only one Indian culture, whose root is Hinduism, and the Muslim is only part of it. There is only one nation, of which the Muslims are a part — we have the same ancestors. The British colonial power preferred and spoiled the Muslims, and it encouraged their secession, according to the principle of "divide and rule." In this way, Pakistan came into existence and it was wrong, a terrible mistake. Our friends there will have to realize one day that the division was madness and that their state will split further after Bangladesh seceded from it.

[DER SPIEGEL] Do you really believe that Pakistan will split?

[Vajpayee] Yes, because Islam, which is the only foundation of the state, drives the Pakistanis apart: Sunnites and Shi'ites fight against each other; by the way, far more radically and sharply than India's Hindus do among each other. In the long run, the parts of Pakistan will have no other choice but to again form a federation with us. I have a joint currency and a joint foreign policy — like in the EU — in mind. That is the future.

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[DER SPIEGEL] Are you talking about the next generations or the next few years?

[Vajpayee] Some federal form will soon come.

[DER SPIEGEL] And the whole will be under Indian dominance. Why should Islamabad go along with it?

[Vajpayee] We cannot make ourselves smaller than we are. Pakistan has to stop voting against India's admission as a permanent Security Council member. We belong there. We Indians have a strong army, and we are a gigantic nation, whose tree is called Hinduism and whose branches cannot be chopped off.

[DER SPIEGEL] However, you want to trim India's Muslim branches at your own discretion.

[Vajpayee] It is up to the Muslims in India to understand that we all have a joint cultural heritage, so they should not exaggerate the differences if they want to stay here in India, and that they should primarily feel and behave as Indians.

[DER SPIEGEL] And if not, will your radical coalition partner Shiv Sena again provoke a situation resembling a civil war in the federal state of Maharashtra as in Bombay in 1992-93 and set Hindus against Muslims, and will thousands of people die again? Bal Thackeray, the Shiv Sena leader and your fellow combatant, openly admires Adolf Hitler.

[Vajpayee] He is not my friend. He tackles problems differently and far more aggressively than I. However, we regard Shiv Sena's actions as a reaction to the intolerance and aggression of the Muslims. Compared to the Congress Party, Shiv Sena is the lesser evil...

[DER SPIEGEL] ...and implements with sheer force what you esthetically formulate as "objectives," destroying old mosques like that at Ajodhja in 1992 only because a Hindu temple is said to have stood there in former times.

[Vajpayee] I have always rejected such actions.

[DER SPIEGEL] And yet you are also dangerously playing with religious feelings, for example, when you promise a "magnificent Hindu temple" at the location of the mosque in Ajodhja in the BJP program. You are banking on the inferiority complex of many Hindus. How can this complex of a religious community that accounts for more than 80 percent of the population be explained?

[Vajpayee] The Hindus are indeed the overwhelming majority in the country, and they feel that, in their own country, they do not have the position that is due to them and are subjugated by minorities. The caste system, which splits and weakens the Hindus, plays a main role here. [passage omitted]

[DER SPIEGEL] Again and again, you mention "Swadeshi," India's independence, self-determination at all costs, as one of these cultural roots of India. Do you want to isolate the country and return it to Mahatma Ghandi's spinning wheel?

[Vajpayee] No, we also know that India is integrated within the world economy, and we are in favor of modernity. Only, we do not believe that we should ape the West. We advocate foreign investment in the infrastructure and high technology — computer chips, not potato chips. The production of consumer goods must remain in India's hands. [passage omitted]

[DER SPIEGEL] Your BJP is considered as prone to scandals as the other parties in India. Do you not sometimes feel ill at ease in the BJP?

[Vajpayee] Yes, occasionally. However, there is no better party in India. The others are far worse.

[DER SPIEGEL] And yet you will have to form a coalition with one of these "worse" parties because even if the BJP were to become the strongest force in the country, you will not have enough deputies for a single-party government. Who is to join forces with the BJP?

[Vajpayee] We will achieve a clear majority. And if we do not get enough — we do not believe in political untouchability. We already have alliances with others, above all regional parties, that do not say this openly yet, but have promised to support us. [passage omitted]

Iran

Iran: Supreme Court Head Receives Zimbabwean Chief Justice

LD0705100196 Tehran IRNA in English 0741 GMT 7 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, May 7, IRNA — Zimbabwe's Chief [Justice] Anthony R. Gubbay and head of the Supreme Court Ayatollah Mohammad Mohammadi Gilani here on Monday [6 May] exchanged views on Tehran-Harare judicial issues.

Gilani expressed satisfaction over restoration of peace and compromise in South Africa and congratulated Zimbabwean judicial delegation on Robert Gabriel Mugabe's reinstatement in the presidential post.

He wished that with the aid of the almighty, may a government of real human rights, fully compatible with the nature and spirit of the human beings, be established in the world.

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Gubbay for his part referred to close ties between Iran and his country and called for expansion of bilateral ties.

He said that such a closeness has expanded through bilateral commercial transactions and adoption of measures by Iranian and Zimbabwean policy makers and judges since Zimbabwe's independence.

Iran: Editorial Criticizes Recent EU Meeting in Brussels

LD0305141596 Tehran IRAN NEWS in English 30 Apr 96 p 2

[Editorial: "Iran Expects an Impartial Europe"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Representative of the European Union and the (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council met last week in Brussels in order to coordinate their policies on bilateral and regional issues.

These representatives made Iran a target for their concern on two issues on which Iran's policy has always been crystal clear and repeatedly made public.

The first regarded the Middle East peace process again. The meeting in the Belgium capital 'called on the government of Iran to join them in condemnation' of what they called 'terrorism in all its forms.'

Now, more than any time in the past, Iran has proved that it condemns terrorism in all its forms. Iran has stood strongly by the rights of the Lebanese against Israel's clear intention to terrorize the civilian population. It is a fact that Iran draws a very clear line between terrorism and a struggle for genuine civil rights, against occupation or exploitation.

It is not Iran but the U.S.-led West which discriminates in condemning terrorism. As far as the Middle East is concerned, it is not the Palestinians or Lebanese but the Israelis who are terrorists, taking the lands of others, trespassing international law and being repeatedly caught in the act of committing incredible crimes of terrorism against the people in that part of the world.

What did the West do to redress the grievances of the Palestinians and the Lebanese?

They discussed these grievances in the Security Council and passed resolutions as a remedy. It is no secret that those resolutions passed by Western countries as members of the Security Council were shamelessly turned down by Israel.

In these circumstances, is there any other option left for the oppressed to turn to for justice; to achieve their genuine rights which were also recognized by that world body? Even a simple-minded person must see that the population took weapons in their hands just because Israel was adamant and the West impartial.

Iran simply wants resolutions that are passed by a world body to be put into practice, and that genuine rights should be awarded to the wounded party.

The West should take note that Iran is one of the biggest victims of terrorism and has sacrificed prominent personalities. The West knows very well that those who made prominent Iranians a target of their terrorism found shelter nowhere but in their own countries.

The part of the resolution by the ministers of the European Union and Council which regarded a misunderstanding between Iran and the UAE is nothing but a laughing stock.

Just turn over the pages of the news media of any country interested in covering developments in the Middle East and those EU ministers would definitely find stories regarding Iran's sincere insistence that the officials of the Islamic Republic and the UAE should sit down at the negotiating table to iron out these problems, whatever they may be.

Was it not Foreign Minister 'Ali Akbar Velayati who visited Abu Dhabi several times? What was the response from the UAE? Silence or a move to air the issue at a meeting such as the one last week in Brussels.

True, we understand that the European ministers kept their economic interests on top of the truth and facts while endorsing the resolution regarding the misunderstanding between Iran and the UAE.

A very clear message is there for Europe to read from Iran. We expect a neutral and impartial role for Europe in this region. If this occurs, Iran will be their best partner in maintaining peace and stability, not only in the Middle East but in the entire world.

Iran: 'Positive Effects' of U.S. Economic Sanctions Viewed

LD0405144596 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 0954 GMT 4 May 96

[Unattributed commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] One year after the U.S. Democratic Administration's decision to impose economic sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran, the signs of defeat in that policy of Washington have become further clear. A year ago, Bill Clinton, at the U.S. Zionist association and while he had the special extremist Zionists' cap on, declared the trade sanctions by U.S.

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companies against Iran. A month later those sanctions were implemented.

Washington statesmen predicted that, bearing in mind that about 25 percent of Iranian oil was being purchased by U.S. companies and some international companies under U.S. influence had invested in our country's oil industry development, the Islamic Republic of Iran would suffer an incurable blow. That was particularly so because the optimists in the White House believed that other Western countries, at least America's close allies, would support America's sanctions against Islamic Iran. Despite extensive diplomatic and propaganda efforts by America, that dream did not come true and America was isolated in imposing economic sanctions against Islamic Iran.

Now, not only experts and businessmen but also certain senior American officials admit that America's unilateral sanctions against our country have brought the opposite results. Not only have those sanctions not led the Islamic Republic of Iran to give up its principled stances — as wished by the Washington ringleaders — they have made U.S. companies suffer heavy losses.

As admitted by many experts, who recently gathered in Dallas in America to assess the effects of Washington's economic sanctions against Tehran, the Islamic Republic of Iran — by successfully marketing and selling its oil to 50 countries — has filled the void left by American purchasers. Moreover, experts acknowledge that America's economic sanctions have resulted in Iranian experts taking up the initiative in many industrial development projects, including those in the oil and gas sectors. Thus, those experts, while increasing the self-sufficiency force, have earned millions of dollar for our country. That is why experts in the West openly admit the fact that American sanctions have had positive effects on Iran, while at the same time they have deprived U.S. companies of the competition arena in a country such as Iran, which is an important, strategic country, well-endowed with resources.

Iran: Paper Urges Prosecution of Balkan War Criminals

LD0305122396 Tehran TEHRAN TIMES in English 1 May 96 p2

[Unattributed article: "Bring War Criminals to Account, Ensure Peace in the Balkans"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] We have signed the Dayton Peace Accord but the Serbs are now preventing Muslims from returning to their former homes, with one Muslim killed and seven injured.

Here we must ask the question: Does a peace accord mean anything? What is the point of representatives sitting at a table signing papers when the people act according to their own needs and grudges? This applies not only to Bosnia but to other regions as well.

We must do something practical to keep the peace. The first question, in general, is: Have we in our talks represented the people? If not, then we must talk to the people and see what is missing in the accord. If an accord is finally reached, then it must be enforced.

It has been said that the Serbs are being prevented from returning to their former homes in Croatia. If that is the case, we must mend the problem. If the Serbs don't have a legitimate reason for stoning and stopping Muslims from returning to their former homes, then they are thugs who must be stopped by some enforcement authority. Otherwise, there is no meaning to a peace accord, to international bodies, and to NATO forces. It is all only a game.

It may be that one reason for the Serbs' bullying is that their criminal leaders have not been brought to book. So long as they move with impunity, other Serbs feel free to sabotage the peace accord.

In order to teach saboteurs a lesson, all war criminals should be brought to book. This will prevent repetition of past tragedies in the Balkans.

Iran: Commentator Perceives Loopholes in Lebanon Accord

NC0305121996 Tehran ABRAR in Persian 30 Apr 96 p 12

[Political commentary by F. Asef: "The Achilles' Heel of the Cease-Fire Agreement in Lebanon"]

[FBIS Translated Text] After 16 days of bloody fighting, a cease-fire and peace (!) have been established in Lebanon. Heavy economic losses were inflicted on Lebanon while the Zionist regime extorted two privileges ahead of its independence day: first, the amendment of the Palestinian Charter and, second, the establishment of peace and a cease-fire in Lebanon.

But more important than the exchange of privileges and their impact on elections in the United States and the Zionist regime is the accord among Syria, Lebanon, the Zionist regime, the United States, and France.

The accord stipulates that retaliatory attacks on civilian areas are prohibited. This proviso was included in the unwritten agreement of 1993 but has now been put in writing. But neither the 1993 agreement nor the current one refer to the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon or renewed attacks on the Hizballah forces.

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This is because Hizballah is not considered a nonmilitary (native) [as published] force or a conventional military force. The accord is silent about the nature or principle of such major terrorist operations [by Israel].

There is no mention of the government-sponsored terrorist tactics of Tel Aviv; if things move in a direction that finds the peace talks blaze new trails of understanding and if Hizballah does not agree with them, it is quite likely that the Zionist regime might carry out swift and secret operations and ensnare Hizballah in a new trap, thus threatening its existence. (This is exactly what was done with 'Arafat's forces in 1982)

On the basis of the current accord the two sides reserve the right to reciprocal legitimate defense only in the region under the illegitimate occupation of the Zionist regime. While this affords recognition to the Resistance forces in the south, it also limits the scope of Hizballah's operations. In view of the military machinery of the Zionist regime, this could endanger the very existence of Hizballah.

The accord indirectly rules out intervention by Syrian and Lebanese armed forces in such an operation (as Syria and Lebanon are members of the committee supervising the implementation of the accord, which includes France, the United States, and the Zionist regime, it isolates the Resistance forces against the Tel Aviv terrorist regime and restricts their operational power).

This possibility gains strength if the peace trend forges ahead with force and firmness; in this case the involved factions would not be inclined to endanger their future for a minority force. If we examine the weaknesses of the current accord we will see that Israel's government-sponsored terrorism is preparing another massacre.

Iran: Article Criticizes Bill on Currency Exchange in Trade Zones

LD0305121996 Tehran KEYHAN in Persian 27 Apr 96 p6

[Article: "Guardian Council's Appropriate Action and the Need for Majles' Alertness"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] During the remaining days of its term, the Fourth Majles passed a bill to amend the regulations setting up free-trade zones. A note of this bill says that the foreign currency rate of exchange in these zones should be allowed to fluctuate in accordance with the market regulations of supply and demand. However, the note recommends that the floating exchange rate should only be observed when money is transferred from foreign countries to these areas. In other words, any transfer of money from these zones to and from the mainland should be carried out in accordance with the regulation set by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Unfortunately the bill is not perfect, and the esteemed Majles approved it without realizing its possible undesirable consequences. Fortunately, however, the Guardian Council has rejected the bill for the time being.

Had the bill passed through the Guardian Council's supervision process, it would have foiled the government's efforts to stabilize the foreign currency exchange rate in the country. [passage omitted]

Despite maintaining a fixed foreign currency exchange rate in the year 1374 [Iranian year 21 March 1995 to 19 March 1996], the annual rate of inflation, according to the governor of the Central Bank, reached 48 percent. The inflation rate would undoubtedly have exceeded this figure had the government adopted a floating rate for foreign currency transactions. The question is this: Are the honorable Majles deputies who voted in favor of amending the regulations of the free-trade zones aware of this danger?

Thousands of passengers visit the free-trade zone areas daily. They come and go by air and sea. It would be very difficult to control the amount of currency each passenger takes with him. Basically, would it be right to prevent passengers from taking their own country's currency, the rial, to these zones? Cabinet members and most Majles deputies know that the relevant organs are facing immense problems just trying to prevent illegal traders from smuggling some contraband goods. How could these organs cope with the added responsibility of controlling the flow of the rial and foreign currency to and from the free-trade zones? Even if they could control the flow, they would create discontent among the natives who regularly visit the mainland.

If approved, the bill would provide an opportunity for smugglers and foreign currency dealers on the black market to move huge sums of hard currency out of the country. At any rate, if the Majles were to insist that the bill should be passed, the said smugglers and currency dealers would concentrate their efforts in the free- trade zone areas. Our country would then face problems similar to those experienced during the latter days of the year 1373 and early days of the year 1374.

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Iran: Majles Approves Bill on Definition of Espionage

LD0505121396 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 0930 GMT 5 May 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The open session of the Majles today debated and approved several draft bills. [passage omitted]

The session also debated and passed a private member's bill on the supplementary article of the clause on moharebeh [waging war or rebelling against God or the system] in the Islamic Penal Code, which had a single urgency priority attached to it.

According to this bill, anyone who transfers secret communications and correspondence, or classified military, political, security, economic, social, or scientific information or secrets to foreigners or mohareb [opposition] groups, or somehow informs them of their content, will be considered spies. All the assets they have gained by this means will be confiscated and they will be considered as mohareb and will be sentenced to death as such. [passage omitted]

The deputies also debated the member's bill banning smoking in public places, which was returned by the Guardian Council to the Majles because it did not conform to one of the principles of the Constitution. The deputies amended the bill so as to satisfy the requirement of the Guardian Council.

Bearing in mind the Majles's decision in the month of Dey 1370 [month starting 22 December 1991] to ban smoking in public places and the decision of the Assembly for the Discernment of What is Best, this amendment states that the government is duty bound to compile and approve the regulations of this bill within three months.

Iran: Editorial Urges 'Active Union' for Journalists

LD0305123196 Tehran TEHRAN TIMES in English 30 Apr 96 p 2

[Editorial: "Third Press Festival — An Active Union Is Indispensable for a Dynamic Press"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The mass media play a crucial role in forming every society's public opinion. This is why the wielders of power do not normally look favourably at the press.

On the one hand, we have the mass media; and on the other hand, the wielders of power who would like the mass media to play their tune. However, an independent mass media, free from the influence of those in power, is an indispensable ingredient of our democracy.

The Third Press Festival is currently being held. It is pertinent to remind officials and our colleagues of a few points on the functioning of the press in Iran.

It is said that rights and duties go hand in hand. That is to say, to be entitled to one's rights one should be aware and committed to one's duties. The press plays a crucial role in making the public aware of its rights and duties. At the same time, it plays a determining role in checking officials from abusing their power and position.

As a family, the press itself should be aware of its rights and committed to its duties. In order to enjoy our rights as members of the press, we need a union.

Having a stressful job, journalists should be given privileges relevant to their jobs, such as early retirement. But we don't enjoy such privileges because we do not have a union to look after our interests.

As President Rafsanjani said in his Sunday [28 April] speech, there is no official bar on forming such a union. The ball is indeed in the court of the press family. This is the time for members of the press to join hands in order to set up an active union to look after our rights in order to be able to perform our duties in the best possible manner.

Iran: Speaker Warns Against Liberal School of Thinking

LD0305143196 Tehran IRAN NEWS in English 1 May 96 p 2

[Article: "Majles Speaker Pushes Basiji Forces To Stop Liberal Thinking"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Iran News National Desk — 'Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri warned yesterday that a liberal school of thinking in Iran would mean that not only Islamic commandments could not be implemented, but that the nation would sink into its former vassal state.

The Majles speaker told a Revolutionary Corps congregation in east Tehran that the widespread participation of Basiji forces and Hizballah masses in the Fifth Majles elections was laudable, according to a report from the Majles public relations department.

He called liberalism a serious threat to the revolution, saying it was not "a superficial threat that has ended and it is necessary for the devoted Basiji and Hezbollahi forces to be present everywhere to destroy such a method of thinking."

"Some believe in dialogue with the United States, to go easy on the Rushdie affair, the Palestinians and the Middle East peace process, but we believe that we

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should not step even one inch backward in retaining our principle and values, because such laxity will destroy the nation's independence," Nateq-Nuri said.

Several years ago, the United States announced it was ready to talk to Iran provided it dismantle revolutionary instruments such as the Revolutionary Corps, the Imam's Relief Committee and the like, the speaker said.

Building several bridges and highways, or launching a development does not mean that our revolutionary values are maintained, he said.

Islamic Iran is the center of attraction and Kabaa of all the Muslims because of being irreconcilable, independent, and entertaining religious thoughts.

Nateq-Nuri said he hoped the Fifth Majles would be more religious-minded than the former Majles. He warned that a liberal Majles and government would pave the way to destruction of revolutionary principles and values.

Basiji forces were the body of the nation, he said, and should plan and act much more seriously so the nation would be saturated with Hezbollahi masses to prevent anti-revolutionary agents from spreading poison.

"The Hezbollahi forces have gained a remarkable majority in Tehran and we hope that it will be the same in provincial towns," Nateq-Nuri said.

Masoud Moamayi, commander of the Revolutionary Corps east of Tehran, said the Revolutionary Corps and the Basiji forces closely controlled the elections and were ready to counter antirevolutionary agents, rascals, and villains.

Iran: Nateq-Nuri Praises Workers for Election Participation

LD0405190996 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 1630 GMT 4 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] At a meeting today with the members of the Central Council of the Islamic Association of Workers, Mr. ['Ali Akbar] Nateq-Nuri, the Majles speaker, delivered a speech in which he praised workers for their active presence in the Majles elections and, referring to the poisoned propaganda of the deviant pre-revolution currents, he said that their lack of success was a result of the workers' profound religious beliefs and intelligence.

The Majles speaker spoke of the religiosity of the working community in the Islamic Republic and stressed the need for strengthening and elevating this fact. He said that laying the groundwork for this was one of the main duties of Islamic workers' clubs. The Majles speaker also expressed the hope that, through the presence of clergymen in working environments, workers would achieve greater growth and pride in the fields of religion, culture, and ideology.

The secretary-general of the Islamic Association of Workers delivered a brief report, at the meeting, about the performance of the Central Council.

Iran: Majles Deputy Says Servants of Reconstruction To 'Disappear'

LD0305153696 Tehran IRAN NEWS in English 1 May 96 p 1

[Unattributed article: "G-6 will disappear with the end of Rafsanjani presidency"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran: A Majles deputy yesterday predicted that the Executives of Construction [as published] of the G-6 will disappear from the political scene in some 15 months.

The deputy, Seyyed Ahmad Rasuli-Nezhad, in an interview with 'IRAN NEWS' said: "The faction of the Executives of Construction will disappear from the Iranian political scene with the termination of the presidency of Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani."

"President Rafsanjani remains silent on the way of working of the G-6 which people believe has the president's backing," he said.

Rasuli-Nejad is a supporter of the Jame'eh-e Ruhanyat-e Mobarez [Militant Clergy Association] (JRM). He is sitting in the current Majles and was elected for the Fifth Term of the Majles from Damavand-Firuzkuh Constituency of Tehran Province in the first round of the elections on 8th March.

"The G-6 members have created a lot of economic, social and cultural problems for the country while in the office," Rasuli-Nejad said.

On 18th January, 16 senior executives including 10 Rafsanjani cabinet ministers, issued a statement last January [as published] through which they announced the presence of their political entity and readiness to participate in the next Majles elections.

They faced a tough challenge from the JRM and the Majles. It was maintained that active participation in the election by the ministers is against the constitutional provision.

Finally, 10 ministers withdrew from the group leaving six leading personalities including four vice-presidents: Mohammad Hashemi, Reza Amrollahi, Mostafa Hashemi Taba and Ata'ollah Mohajerani. Two others

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are Tehran Mayor Gholam Reza Karbaschi and Governor of the Central Bank of Iran Mohsen Nurbakhsh.

"We faced a lot of foreign exchange and economic problems when Nurbakhsh was minister of finance and economic affairs," Rasuli-Nezhad said.

"In the same way," he said, "Mayor Karbaschi's policies paved the way for high prices of consumer goods."

Rasuli-Nezhad said that the mayor has imposed heavy duties on housing construction which in return pushed the prices of houses and other goods very high.

Ironically, the other municipalities in the country also followed what the Tehran Municipality did which resulted in high prices of the consumers goods across the country.

"The work which was done by the municipality is much less compared to the money the Tehran civic body received from the residents of the capital," Rasuli-Nezhad said.

The predecessors of Mr Karbaschi remained preoccupied by the tasks related to the Iraqi imposed war and could not do what they were supposed to do, he said, adding that Tehran Municipality makes undue and unnecessary propaganda about what it does here.

Iran: Draft Bill on Election Law Reform Criticized

LD0305215396 Tehran ASR-E MA in Persian 1 May 96 p 3

[Comment on Election Law: "From Bad to Worse"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Last week, immediately after the elections our eyes alighted on a double-urgency electoral reform bill. This double-urgency bill — which was hastily drawn up so that there was no time for a fair copy to be made out of the scrawl — was debated by the Majles and a single-urgency status was approved for it.

The bill, which, according to Tehran's interim Friday imam, should be considered as one of the remnants of the virtuous works of the fourth Majles, completes the consultative supervision [vetting law for parliamentary candidates], and gives a six-month opportunity to the Guardian Council so that it can verify the "good reputation" of the candidates.

In this law [bill], for the first time conditions have been stipulated for voters (besides the age requirement) which are a harbinger of later conditions!

Thanks be to the designers of the bill for their endeavors and may their reward be worthy of their effort. But would that they would somehow give legal form to the second recommendation of Tehran's interim Friday imam as well, and they would require every candidate to leave a deposit with the government so that it can be kept in case they do not attain a quorum.

That idea, which would please God, could become a source of income for the annual government budget as well as bring about the possibility of reconstructing the burnt former Majles building. Then, of course, that can be counted as one of the remnants of the virtuous work done by the fourth Majles.

In another article of the bill it is stipulated that if the competence of a candidate is rejected but later confirmed by the Guardian Council after the elections have been held, then the elections should be held again [in that constituency].

What can be gleaned from this article is that if for instance in a large constituency like Tehran, where nearly 1,000 register as candidates, even if one instance of a mistake occurs then more than 30 candidates are going to be kicked out of the Majles and the elections held again.

It can be seen that through extreme anxiety to be fair, the honorable proposers of the bill, in order not to violate anybody's rights, prefer the people in the capital to go to the ballot box, and the expense of that to be borne by the government.

The proposers of the bill must truly be hailed for the vastness of their sense of justice and fairness. As the double-urgency of this bill failed to be approved and it is unlikely that this bill will become one of remnants of the virtuous work done by the fourth Majles, we will defer a serious discussion of it to a more appropriate time.

Iran: 'Oath of Allegiance' by Provincial Deputies Opposed

LD0405115696 Tehran ASR-E MA in Persian 1 May 96 p 3

[Unattributed article: "Allegiance in the Capital or Else!"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The faction that intended to win the decisive majority of Majles seats in the fifth elections but faced defeat in its strategy of monopolizing power, is now forcing provincial deputies to take an oath of allegiance with its leader.

The election review in the provinces has not yet ended and it is possible that some constituency results or votes from some ballot boxes might be nullified. Furthermore, the last Majles hurdle, the approval of the credentials, is still to come, and many provincial deputies fear that they might lose their seats at the last moment.

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This psychological condition has allowed the mentioned faction to threaten and make promises to the provincial deputies and even offer bribes to cover election costs.

To ask the provincial deputies to go Tehran for an oath of allegiance is a powerful tool that could create a psychological climate in favor of this faction and prepare the way for the ascendence of the faction's leader. It is absolutely necessary to break this psychological climate of monopoly.

Iran: Paper Discusses Pressures on SALAM During Elections

LD0405170996 Tehran 'ASR-E MA in Persian 1 May 96 p 7

[Unattributed article: "SALAM and Pressure Groups"]

[FBIS Translated Text] An incident that took place in the last few days before the second round of the elections consisted of pressures exerted on SALAM newspaper in an organized way, and, unfortunately, the unsuitable coverage it received in some papers, which had joined this trend of hard-line posturing during the election. A short account of the matter is that an advertisement expressing support for a number of the electoral candidates in Tehran was published in that newspaper and the phrase "a group of Basijis from eastern Tehran" was written underneath it.

Official and written complaints from the eminent regional and overall commanders of the Basij against the above-mentioned advertisement were conveyed to the newspaper by a nighttime gathering of Basiji brothers in front of the newspaper office, demanding, in the space of a very limited time, that the complaints be published in the already laid out issue of the paper, and there was so little time for decision making that the newspaper decided to publish a lengthy explanation of the incident after the elections.

The issue here is not the difference of approach, such that this same precious and revolutionary term has been used in advertisements published in other newspapers, and even in that same newspaper, in support of other things, without receiving the slightest official or unofficial protest. The issue is, rather, the absence of accepted legal and press methods for the reflection of different or opposing views. How can it be accepted that the soundness of the climate for press activities is so easily brought into question and that the dignity of the system of the Islamic Republic, legal institutions, and clear and explicit regulations, banning any exertion of pressure for the publication of material in the press, can be sacrificed for the passing tendencies of one faction?

As we have declared before, we are of the opinion that, without making any claims, they have, in their very productive lifetime, demonstrated their sympathy and devotion to the revolution, the system and the ideals of the Imam [Khomeyni], may God be satisfied with his deeds, and no fair person can deny that the eminent managing director has a heart filled with concern, a rich capacity for expression and enormous courage — with the assistance of his dedicated staff — in defense of the principles and values of the Islamic revolution.

What we have to ask now is how the breaking of legal and personal boundaries can be justified on the basis of shari'ah, revolutionary interests or legal grounds? And how far can measures of this kind be pushed? What can, unfortunately, be seen as an extension of such activities is the serious vulnerability of the press, especially of domestic and revolutionary publications. It is hoped that, through an examination and reconsideration of such activities, the cultural life of the press may put this difficult phase behind it, and that, by finding solutions to activities of this kind, such indefensible and uncontrollable kinds of behavior can be brought to an end.

Iran: Paper Asks How Supposed Liberals Entered Majles

LD0505161896 Tehran 'ASR-E MA in Persian 1 May 96 p 3

[Unattributed commentary: "Where Were All the Liberals?"]

[FBIS Translated Text] A Majles deputy from Tehran, who two months ago had spoken of the president's incompetence, admitted in an interview last week that despite all the precautions some liberals have managed to get themselves into the Majles. The Majles must be purged of such elements during the debates for approval of credentials.

Another has considered liberalism in the body of the Islamic Republic as a cancerous growth which despite surgery sometimes recurs and reproduces itself. These honorable gentlemen must be asked: Where have all those hardy liberals sprung from who have managed to go through the herculean labors of consultative supervision, approval of their competence by the esteemed Guardian Council, and the annulment stage, and without the use of any of the resources of certain military bodies as well as officially organized publicity, eventually get themselves into the Majles?

Bearing in mind that in this parliamentary term, just like the term before it, the Guardian Council's policy was to "ascertain the competence" of each and every

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candidate, not to "ascertain their incompetence" and that essentially, on that very basis, the competence of many candidate] from the revolutionary forces and in particular the "followers of the Imam's ideology" was not confirmed, the question arises as to how did the competence of all those liberals come to be confirmed? We draw the attention of our esteemed readers to this point that the slogan of the monopolist faction for stressing the need for the implementation of advisory supervision is the introduction of competent individuals by supervisory officials and the choosing of the most competent candidates by the people. How did the competence of all those liberals come to be confirmed then when, according to an editorial in the organ of the monopolists [referring to RESALAT], they are the internal enemies of the revolution? As a rule, either the Guardian Council and other executive and supervisory bodies have been negligent in carrying out their duties or liberal is an inappropriate label which monopolists seek to attach to all their electoral rivals and in this way, as well as by misusing the statements of the exalted leader [Khamene'i], move towards eliminating all the revolutionary and Muslim forces which oppose monopoly of power by one faction.

Iran: Candidates Sum Up Election Results

LD0605164396 Tehran IRAN NEWS in English 30 Apr 96 p 1, 13

[Unattributed article: "The Fifth Majles, a Balanced One"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] TEHRAN - With their election turn-out, the people prevented bazaar-affiliated candidates from winning seats in the Fifth Majles (Parliament), Secretary General of the Islamic Revolution's Mujahideen Organization Mohammad Salamati said here Thursday [25 April].

Speaking at a press conference, he noted, "By going to the polls, the people issued this special message for the officials."

"During the elections, the people warmly welcomed the coalition of the groups following the Imam's [Khomeyni] line of thought, while the coalition list in Tehran was incomplete in both rounds," he added.

"In the run-off, four of these candidates from the Tehran constituency assumed Majles seats, while around 50 of the candidates of the coalition of the Imam's line of thought in the provinces won the seats," Salamati remarked.

In Tehran, an average 265,000 votes were cast for candidates of this group, indicating the confidence of a majority of the people in the coalition of the Imam's line of thought, he maintained.

Salamati added, "Such warm welcome of the people has been beneficial for the group and the country, as it leads to the revival of the Imam's line of thought, political dynamism of the universities, and elucidation of the stances of other groups."

The coalition of the Imam's line of thought intended to disrupt a single wing's power monopoly in Tehran and the provinces, he said, adding, "They succeeded, as no single wing was able to win absolute majority."

Salamati remarked that the fifths Majles will be balanced in terms of the make up of the candidates.

"Prior to the elections, a group said that the followers of the Imam's line of thought were afraid of the peoples' votes, as they would not vote for such candidates, but the election results showed they were wrong," the secretary general cited.

He enumerated the problems of the elections. "First, disqualification of different candidates of the coalition of the Imam's line of thought. Second, the unilateral stances of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) in favor of a special group. Third, problems ensuing at the time of the elections and vote counting, when our observers as the candidates' representatives faced special treatments. Fourth, illegal moves of some military and disciplinary forces."

"We hope that after special surveys conducted by the Election Monitoring Boards and the Council of Guardians, the results would be favorable for all people and would not create dissatisfaction among the groups, wings, and the people," he emphasized.

"We have heard that when votes of a poll were declared vain and void, the number of votes of some candidates was altered, as is the case mostly in the provinces. We hope this would not happen, as it will deflate the peoples' morale," Salamati maintained.

Also speaking to reporters, Seyyed Kazem Akrami, a candidate of the coalition of the Imam's line of thought, said, "The peoples' enhanced turn-out was due to the candidacy of the followers of the Imam's line of thought."

"We hope that the followers of the Imam's line of thought would be given more elbow room, since their records of struggles and executive performances indicate that they love the system, Islam, and "wilayah faqih" [velayat-e faqih, rule of the supreme jurisconsult], he stressed.

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Akrami added that the interests of Islam, the Imam's line of thought, and the Revolution are truly more sublime than the interests of the groups.

He said, "Whoever loves Islam, the Revolution, and Iran should prefer overall interests to group interests."

Akrami called on the fifth Majles to see to the Election Law and election campaigns, noting, "We have suffered a great deal from the way the election campaigns are carried out and from the extravagant expenses made."

"We hope that the fifth Majles election campaigns would make the people further inclined toward Islamic values and avoid excessive costs and waste of assets in the sixth Majles," he remarked.

Representative of the Islamic Association of Iran's Medical Community 'Ali Shakurirad also addressed the reporters.

He expressed pity that during the election campaigns, the spirit of the law was not observed and some officials enforced their personal executive, judicial, and supervisory tastes.

As instances, he referred to reviewing the qualifications of the candidates and counting the votes. "If the votes had been carefully counted, the votes of the candidates of the Imam's line of thought in the constituencies of Tehran and the provinces would have been higher than the declared figures."

"Then more of these candidates would have occupied Majles seats," he added.

Another example was neglect for social discipline which was set forth by the Leader [Khamene'i] in his New Year's message, he noted adding, "In the second round of the elections, social discipline was violated by followers of the Leadership and resulted in political chaos, as a result of which many political forces which have a policy of their own fell politically insecure now."

Representatives of the Islamic Association of University Professors Najif Qoli Habibi said, "The Council of Guardians which bears regulatory supervision is religiously, legally, politically, and socially responsible for any enforcement of tastes. The Council is responsible before the Almighty, the people, the Muslims, the Leadership... and should present a clear answer, as compensation of the offences is necessary and religiously imperative."

It is worthy of note that the Coalition of the Line of Imam's Thought is a leftist group approved by the Majma-e Rowhaniyun Mobarez (MRM) [Militant Clerics Society] and held the majority of the seats of the third Majles.

Pakistan

Pakistan: Afghan Delegation Arrives for Bilateral Talks

BK0705055096 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 0500 GMT 7 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] A six-member Afghan delegation led by the minister for transport, Mr. 'Abdol Ghafar, arrived in Islamabad yesterday for talks with the officials. An official of the Foreign Office said during the talks, they would raise the issue of the compensation for the destruction of Pakistani Embassy and reopening of the embassy in Kabul.

Pakistan: Afghan, Pakistani Government Delegations Hold Talks

LD0605193796 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Pashto 1230 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The representatives of Afghanistan and Pakistan started talks in Islamabad today. According to an ASSOCIATED PRESS report from Islamabad, a Pakistani Foreign Ministry spokesman said general issues including the reopening of roads between the two countries were on the agenda of the talks. It is said that Afghanistan-Pakistan relations became tense after Pakistan's embassy in Kabul was attacked last September.

Pakistan: Defense Minister—U.S. Refunds $124 Million for F-16's

BK0605164296 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in Urdu 1500 GMT 6 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Defense Minister Aftab Shaban Mirani told the National Assembly today that the United States has refunded $124 million from the $658 million paid by Pakistan for F-16 fighter planes and their spare parts. He said the repayment of this amount has been effected as a result of talks between the United States and Pakistan held in Washington at the beginning of last month. This is the first repayment of the total amount paid by Pakistan, and the U.S. Government has promised that the remainder will be repaid after the sale of F-16 aircraft. He said the stance of the Government of Pakistan is that the U.S. Government should return the remaining amount of $534 million and its profit, and Pakistan has nothing to do with the amount for which the United States sells these aircraft. The call attention notice was tabled by Gauhar Ayub Khan, Khwaja Mohammad Asif, Chaudhary Jaffar Iqbal, Hamza, and Hassan Iqbal.

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Pakistan: Foreign Secretary Stresses 'Cordial' Ties With Russia

BK0605141396 Islamabad THE MUSLIM in English 6 May 96 p 12

[Report by Mohammad Yasin]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Islamabad, May 5 — Foreign Secretary Najmuddin Sheikh said here Sunday [5 May] night that Pakistan was keen to have cordial relations with Moscow and his visit to Moscow was aimed at promoting relations with Russia.

Talking to a group of newsmen at the reception hosted by the Ambassador of Turkey in honour of the visiting Under Secretary of Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Onur Oymen [name as published], the Foreign Secretary said the Pakistan delegation would have consultations with the host on bilateral relations and would also encompass the gamut of situation in Afghanistan.

Dilating on recent strategic understanding between Russia, China and the Central Asian States, the Foreign Secretary said, such an understanding was in favor of Pakistan. It would not have a negative impact on Pakistan, Najmuddin Sheikh said.

The Foreign Secretary said Pakistan was desirous of having cordial relations with Russia. He said the Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation was about to visit Islamabad. But now he had been appointed Russia's Ambassador to New Delhi. He said he was visiting Moscow very soon.

Replying to a question about the visit of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto to Moscow the Foreign Secretary said, it would come off only after the Russian Presidential election.

Mr. Sheikh said the Afghan Transport Minister was leading his country's delegation to Islamabad. He replied in affirmative when asked if Pakistan had accepted Afghanistan's apology. He said the decision to open or not to open Pakistan's embassy in Kabul would be taken during the forthcoming talks with the Afghan Transport Minister.

Meanwhile the visiting Under Secretary of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Oymen while talking to The Muslim said he had brought a letter from his Prime Minister for the Prime Minister of Pakistan Benazir Bhutto. He said that he could not meet the Prime Minister because of her preoccupations but he had delivered the letter to the Foreign Office of Pakistan. He said he had met President Leghari and other officials. He described his talks with the Pakistani officials as very useful. He said his visit was part of the usual consultations with Pakistan side.

The Turkish Under Secretary while replying to a question about the defense training agreement signed with Israel said, his government had discussed Middle East peace process with that country.

Pakistan: Interior Minister Discusses MQM, Karachi, Imran Khan

BK0605142596 Islamabad THE NEWS in English 6 May 96 pp 1, 10

[Report by Tariq Butt]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Islamabad — Interior Minister Nasirullah Babar said Sunday [5 May] that British authorities appear to be satisfied with the documentary evidence given by Pakistan to them against MQM [Muhajir Qaumi Movement] founder Altaf Hussain for his terrorist activities.

He informally told newsmen that the government has handed over the evidence to the British foreign ministry and home department, and they have sent it to their legal department for expert opinion on it to proceed against Hussain.

"They have not asked for more information from us," Babar said adding that Britain would not extradite Hussain to Pakistan (due to the absence of an extradition treaty between the two countries), but would send him to a third country or stop him from continuing his objectionable activities from the British soil.

To a question, Babar said the government does not plan to give a general amnesty to MQM activists involved in terrorism. "However, we are ready to be lenient to those who are involved in minor offences." If these offenders, he said, did not want to come before the authorities, they should send their relatives to them, and they may be pardoned off after getting sentences of five or six months.

He said on his advice the government has now started taking steps in Karachi, which benefit the people at the grass-root level. He said there is very little likelihood of major terrorist incidents in Karachi. However, small incidents may continue to take place, he said.

Answering a question about Imran Khan's complaint that he is being followed by intelligence agencies, the Interior Minister said, "I cannot do anything if he sees shadows behind."

He said if Khan comes to him with the complaint, he would look into it although the Intelligence Bureau is not under his command. Babar said Khan is not being followed because he is not a threat to the government.

To a question about recent discussion on terrorism between officials of Pakistan and Israel in Manila, the

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Interior Minister said this took place at an international seminar in February.

"There was no one-to-one discussion between the two countries. It so happened that Pakistan and Israel were in one group of four participating countries which were made by the organisers", Babar said adding that Pakistan may have to ignore several international fora including the UN General Assembly if it does not want participation of one country or the other.

He told a questioner that the government had found no positive linkage between the terrorism in Karachi and the recent bus blast near Bhai Pheru and the explosion at the Shaukat Khanum Memorial Trust Hospital (SKMTH). "However, the MQM has indulged in certain activities in Punjab."

The Minister said India, through these blasts, wants to divert the attention from the sham elections in the occupied Kashmir. Meanwhile, the chief govt negotiator Law Minister ND Khan told newsmen that contacts have been established with the MQM to resume the suspended talks. "Now, the environment is better to start talks as peace prevails in Karachi and terrorism has been eliminated." He said the chief MQM negotiator Ajmal Dehlvi has been provided three police mobile squads for his protection.

Pakistan: Imran Khan Complains to Chief Justice of 'Harassment'

BK0605141996 Islamabad THE NATION in English 6 May 96 pp 1, 4

[Report by Lahore correspondent]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Convener Tehrik-i-Insaf [Movement for Justice] Imran Khan has asked the Chief Justice of Pakistan to hold a probe, through the Supreme Court of Pakistan, into harassment and intimidation involving state agencies against him which amounts to breach of his fundamental rights.

In a letter addressed to the Chief Justice, Imran pointed out that he is being harassed his telephones are bugged and his movements are being monitored by the government agencies. He alleged that all this was occurring in a democratic set up and the incumbent chief executive of the country claim herself as champion of democracy.

The fund raising drives and SKMT [Shaukat Khanum Memorial Trust] advertisements were unlawfully banned on the electronic media. He expressed concern over handling of investigations in SKMT [hospital] blast by government as initially it was opined that the cause of blast was the malfunctioning of air conditioning plant. He observed that it would be pertinent to examine that who has the means and the motive to detonate the explosive which killed seven patients and wounded 35 innocent people. Praising the role of the judiciary and 'landmark ruling of the March 20' 1996' Imran said that "the Supreme Court stands as the sole beacon light in this era of corruption upholding the supremacy of law and independence of the judiciary."

Following is text of the letter, "I am writing to you as a common citizen of Pakistan and wish to bring to your kind notice a glaring pattern of abuse harassment and intimidation involving state agencies amounting to breach of my fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Specifically it includes but is not limited to

1. Telephone tapping.

2. Tailing and surveillance.

3. Harassment tantamount to intimidation.

All of this is occurring in an allegedly democratic set-up whose chief executive is an especially articulate proponent and champion of democratic freedoms here and abroad, even fund raising drives to raise money to battle cancer, which has increased sharply in recent years, were arbitrarily and unlawfully blocked on national TV run on the money of the tax paying public of Pakistan.

I am also concerned about the way in which the government has handled the bomb blast at the SKM Cancer Hospital. Amazingly this vicious and cowardly attack of terrorism on the cancer hospital was laid at the doorsteps of those who built it and were its biggest victims. So obscene and ridiculous was the need to malign and shift the blame the government agencies, initially without any evidence blamed the blast on the malfunctioning of the hospital air- conditioning instead of the bomb. It is pertinent here to examine who has the means and the motive to detonate the explosive device which killed seven patients and wounded 35 people in the hospital. There are credible suggestions that point the finger at certain government agencies raising sufficient grounds for a full-fledged probe conducted by the Supreme Court.

In the darkness of the existing culture of injustice and corruption the Supreme Court stands as the sole beacon upholding the supremacy of law and independence of the judiciary from executing, meddling as shown by its landmark ruling of March 20, 1996."

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Pakistan: Editorial Views Possibility of Government-MQM Accommodation

BK0605140696 Islamabad THE NEWS in English 6 May 96 p 7

[Editorial: "Positive Signs"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's statement on relations between the government and the Muhajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) admits to a healthy change in the thinking of both sides and their readiness to bridge the gulf that divides them. It can be hoped that this development, even if it is still somewhat narrow, might allow for restructuring future relations in a manner that will end any feeling of alienation on the part of the Muhajirs and bring the MQM into the mainstream once more.

The factors that created a wide chasm between Islamabad and the MQM are many, but the main ones are their failure to resolve their differences politically and the hard positions they adopted. For some reasons that are still not clear, what was initially a gross case of misunderstanding, snowballed into a confrontation. This degenerated into what has variously been termed as terrorism, repression, ethnic cleansing, etc., depending on which side was making the accusation. The saddest part is that there is never any shortage of prejudice and hate in such trying times, when it is all the more necessary to salve injured feelings and open doors of accommodation.

Hopefully now that both sides are coming closer, as the Prime Minister has stated, there will be no more of the charges and counter-charges and the idiom of malevolence. Much of what had been said by both sides was extremist in nature and most unfortunate. That it may have been uttered in the heat of the moment does not exculpate those who make such wild, thoughtless allegations.

It might not be possible to repair all the damage that has been caused; but there is reason to believe that, with the leaders having become wiser after the event, their new sagacity will be put to good use in the future.

The several steps both sides have taken to come closer realignment of their policies, acceptance of demands, adopting of various confidence-building measures augur well for the future. The people in Sindh's main urban areas have suffered most in this prolonged period of disturbance and need respite to put their badly shattered lives together again. It is unlikely that either side will ever be able to recompense them for their losses, not so much in terms of material goods but in bereavement and emotional injury. However, bridging the gulf that divides them will be only half the task done. The hardest part will be overcoming the formidable mountain of doubt and suspicion that both sides have built. It will need time and patience on the part of the government particularly, to try to roll back at least some segment of the stream of events that have taken place. Redistributing the spoils of power and making some minor adjustments might mollify the MQM, but the authorities also have to re-correct the perceptions they have drummed into the minds of the public about "them". It will be in this field that much will be needed to be done than merely a show of everything being normal.

Pakistan: Defense Minister Stresses Effort To Maintain Order

BK0605141596 Islamabad THE NEWS in English 6 May 96 p 12

[APP report]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Islamabad — Defense Minister Aftab Shaban Mirani said the government is taking all necessary measures to curb untoward incidents and to award deterrent punishment to anti-state elements.

Talking to newsmen on arrival at Margalla Railway Station here Sunday [5 May] morning by Awami Train, the minister said the government is making all out efforts to maintain law and order situation throughout the country.

To a question regarding Karachi, he said, the situation has immensely improved and masses were enjoying congenial atmosphere.

To another question regarding bomb blasts in Lahore, the defense minister said security agencies have been put on alert and are ready to meet any sort of emergency.

However, he appealed to the people to cooperate with agencies and to keep a vigil on anti-social elements to curb their nefarious designs, he added.

Replying to a query he said "people are the real power in democracy" and Imran Khan should contact masses "however there is no chance of success for Imran in the field of politics", the minister added.

Speaking on the development projects launched by the government Mirani said history will preserve the name of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto for launching such tremendous schemes for the welfare of the general public.

"Control on rapid increase in population is inevitable to take maximum benefits of civic amenities", he said as the birth rate is tremendously high to meet their day to day requirements, he added.

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Pakistan: National Assembly Expresses 'Solidarity' With Kashmiris

BK0705084296 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Overseas Service in English 0800 GMT 7 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In occupied Kashmir, a total strike is being observed throughout the valley in protest against the so-called elections today. Kashmiris of all shades of opinion have already rejected the Indian ploy. The All Parties Hurriyat Conference has denounced the drama of elections, saying that these could not be a substitute of the right of self-determination of the people of Kashmir.

The National Assembly at the very outset of its proceedings this morning expressed its unanimous solidarity with the struggling people of occupied Kashmir. Rising on a point of order, the deputy leader of opposition, Mr. Gauhar Ayub Khan, invited the attention of the house toward farcical elections being staged in the held-valley under the guns of Indian occupation forces. Responding to this call on behalf of the government side, the minister of state for law and justice, Mian Raza Rabbani, stated that the message of solidarity from the National Assembly to the people of occupied Kashmir is unanimous, loud, and clear. Members from both sides of the house are wearing black arm bands to express solidarity with the people of occupied Kashmir. Special prayers were offered for the success of struggle of the Kashmiri people. The house also observed a three-minute silence as a token of solidarity with the suffering people of occupied Kashmir.

The foreign minister, Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali, has said Kashmiri people have completely rejected the fraudulent elections in occupied valley by refusing to participate in the polling. In an interview in Islamabad, he said the 110 candidates are contesting for six seats and aside from Gulam Rasool, who is president of Congress-I of Jammu and Kashmir, there is no prominent candidate. He said India is violating the UN resolutions on Kashmir by holding sham elections.

Pakistan: Antielection Protest Strike Reported in Kashmir

BK0705053296 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 0500 GMT 7 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In occupied Kashmir, total strike is being observed throughout the valley in protest against the so-called elections in Jammu and Ladakh today. Kashmiris of all shades of opinion have already rejected the Indian ploy. The All Parties Hurriyat Conference, the sole representative body of Kashmiris, has also denounced the drama of elections, saying that these could not be a substitute of the right of self-determination of the people of Kashmir. Kashmiri Employees Union has also boycotted the election duty and in a bid to subvert the total rejection by the Kashmiri people, the Indian puppet administration has booked outsiders for election duties to hoodwink the world public opinion. In addition, largest ever mobilization of Indian troops has been made in the occupied territory. Abaout 100,000 additional paramilitary personnel have been airdashed for election duty to augment the existing 650,000 Indian forces already present in the valley.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka: Army Arrests 'Underworld Figure,' Investigates LTTE Ties

BK0705034696 Colombo DAILY NEWS in English 7 May 96

[Report by Sarath Malalasekera—received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] A LEADING underworld figure of Colombo was arrested by Army personnel and handed over to the CID [Criminal Investigation Department] for further investigations.

A special CID team which conducted investigations is trying to ascertain whether the suspect now in CID custody, was a financier of the LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam].

CID investigations revealed that the suspect was the owner of ten luxury houses in Colombo and outstations. He also owned several vehicles.

CID said that when the Army arrested the suspect, he was in possession of 700 grams of hard drugs and a weapon.

The suspect was described by the CID as "Kudu Guna" and well known to the underworld, investigators said.

After recording the statement of the suspect the CID have taken five more suspects into custody in connection with several criminal offenses.

Sri Lanka: New Army Commander Interviewed on Military Situation

BK0605065196 Colombo SUNDAY OBSERVER in English 5 May 96

[Interview with Lieutenant General Rohan Daluwatte, new Sri Lankan Army commander, by correspondent Lakshman Gunasekara; place and date not given—received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] [Gunasekara] Has Operation Riviresa ended?

[Daluwatte] I cannot disclose that kind of information.

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[Gunasekara] How successful has the Riviresa campaign been in weakening the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam? (LTTE)

[Daluwatte] In terms of their military capability and organisational base for war, we could say that the LTTE has been weakened by about 75 per cent.

[Gunasekara] Will the next objective be the Vanni?

[Daluwatte] I have a plan, but we cannot reveal our future operations.

[Gunasekara] The war in the Vanni jungles will be different from the fighting in the more open country of the Peninsula where conventional warfare was possible with the use of heavy fire power such as main battle tanks. Is the Army ready for major operations in the jungle?

[Daluwatte] Yes. Today, we have experience in jungle warfare. We have units trained in jungle warfare like the Special Forces.

[Gunasekara] After several years, the armed forces have suddenly been very successful and today we have a complete change of scenario in the conflict. What enabled this dramatic development?

[Daluwatte] The main thing is the existence of a clear strategy. I think this time the Government approached the whole problem on the basis of a national plan. The political leadership gave us our strategy according to which we worked out our military strategy. The political leadership given by the Government was crucial. They gave full backing for our effort. They gave us everything we wanted in terms of hardware.

[Gunasekara] How do you feel about the Government's intention to negotiate with the LTTE?

[Daluwatte] A political solution is part of the approach. The national plan includes strategies for political negotiations.

[Gunasekara] How do you respond to the view expressed by some sections that, now the battle of Jaffna has been won, the LTTE could and should be finished off militarily?

[Daluwatte] For this kind of war, there should be a national plan. A national plan doesn't only refer to the military. It covers political and economic activity as well. Now that we have a national plan, we have the strategy for defeating the LTTE both militarily and politically. A political solution is a necessary part of this process.

[Gunasekara] What are you doing about re-establishing control of the East?

[Daluwatte] We have to handle that. The East is not a big deal. I don't foresee many problems in bringing the area under control.

[Gunasekara] Will there be any further re-organisation of the Army?

[Daluwatte] The re-structuring begun a few years back has been very useful. I was personally involved in that work. Further re-structuring is not necessary. The need is to fill up our shortfall in troop strength.

[Gunasekara] What has been Deputy Defence Minister Ratwatte's role in the recent military campaign?

[Daluwatte] Minister Ratwatte gave us all the encouragement in our preparations. His regular visits to the battlefront are tremendous morale boosters for our soldiers. They like to know that the political leaders are personally interested.

[Gunasekara] What do you think of him as Deputy Defence Minister?

[Daluwatte] Our military establishment has a tradition of neither criticising nor praising the political leaders.

[Gunasekara] So you think that the Army, as a professional institution, must steer clear of politics?

[Daluwatte] Of course.

[Gunasekara] But what about the allegations that in the recent past certain officers were involved in politics in various ways - in elections for example?

[Daluwatte] If officers have been involved in politics, then they have done wrong. To my mind, we should not get involved at all in politics. We should serve whatever party that comes into power through democratic means.

[Gunasekara] The Army got a rather bad reputation in the past because of atrocities against civilians, and during the counter-insurgency against the JVP, there were many allegations of death squads. How successful has the Army been in recovering from this poor record of behaviour?

[Daluwatte] We have come a long way from that. Our troops are more disciplined now and, our morale is good. I will not tolerate that kind of activity at all.

[Gunasekara] While the forces are busy winning hearts and minds in the North after the successful offensive, there are complaints of troops harassing civilians in the East where the LTTE is carrying out attacks. Can you comment?

[Daluwatte] There have been some incidents, no doubt about that. We are taking measures to curb that behaviour.

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[Gunasekara] Was there not a strategy of consolidating in the East first, before launching a campaign in the North?

[Daluwatte] There was such a strategy earlier. But it did not bring the desired results. The centre of the LTTE's operations is in the North. There is no point in playing hide and seek. We must take the bull by the horns, and that is what we are doing in the Riviresa offensives. We have hit them where it hurts most!

[Gunasekara] The return of 250,000 civilians into the newly cleared areas of the Peninsula means that in the future the LTTE could launch guerilla-type strikes from among the civilian population. How are you going to deal with that?

[Daluwatte] There is no way we can completely rule out infiltration by the LTTE. But we are applying strict screening procedures in bringing people back into the cleared areas. And we will seek the people's co-operation in maintaining security. The civilians have welcomed us and are ready to co-operate. We are taking other measures as well, to prevent such infiltration. We now have a lot of experience in this kind of thing.

[Gunasekara] Do you think the JVP [Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna] is yet a threat as a potential insurgent movement?

[Daluwatte] We have no reports of any revived threat so far. I don't think they can come up to the same level of activity as in the past.

[Gunasekara] How can the civilian population support the armed forces?

[Daluwatte] The people are already giving us much moral support. But they can do much more by coming forward to fight. We need to build up our forces for future campaigns. As we clear more territory, we need more troops to protect these areas. That is why we need the support of the people.

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